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POPULAR AND HUMOROUS VERSES



VERSES

POPULAR AND HUMOROUS

BY

HENRY LAWSON

AUTHOR OF "WHEN THE WORLD WAS WIDE AND OTHER VERSES,"
"WHILE THE BILLY BOILS," AND "ON THE TRACK AND
OVER THE SLIPRAILS"



"A hundred miles shall see to-night the lights of Cobb and Co.!"

SYDNEY

ANGUS AND ROBERTSON

LONDON: THE AUSTRALIAN BOOK COMPANY

38 WEST SMITHFIELD, E.C.

1900

SYDNEY :
WEBSDALE, SHOOSMITH AND CO., PRINTERS,
117 CLARENCE STREET.

PR
6023
L44v

PREFACE

My acknowledgments of the courtesy of the editors and proprietors of the newspapers in which most of these verses were first published are due and are gratefully discharged on the eve of my departure for England. Chief among them is the *Sydney Bulletin* ; others are the *Sydney Town and Country Journal*, *Freeman's Journal*, and *Truth*, and the *New Zealand Mail*.

A few new pieces are included in the collection.

H. L.

Sydney, March 17th, 1900.

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*"Once I wrote a little poem which I thought was very fine,
And I showed the printer's copy to a critic friend of mine,
First he praised the thing a little"*
page 125.

THE PORTS OF THE OPEN SEA

Down here where the ships loom large in
The gloom when the sea-storms veer,
Down here on the south-west margin
Of the western hemisphere,
Where the might of a world-wide ocean
Round the youngest land rolls free—
Storm-bound from the world's commotion,
Lie the Ports of the Open Sea.

By the bluff where the grey sand reaches
To the kerb of the spray-swept street,
By the sweep of the black sand beaches
From the main-road travellers' feet,
By the heights like a work Titanic,
Begun ere the gods' work ceased,
By a bluff-lined coast volcanic
Lie the Ports of the wild South-east.

By the steeps of the snow-capped ranges,
By the scarped and terraced hills—
Far away from the swift life-changes,
From the wear of the strife that kills—
Where the land in the Spring seems younger
Than a land of the Earth might be—
Oh ! the hearts of the rovers hunger
For the Ports of the Open Sea.

But the captains watch and hearken
For a sign of the South Sea wrath—
Let the face of the South-east darken,
And they turn to the ocean path.
Ay, the sea-boats dare not linger,
Whatever the cargo be ;
When the South-east lifts a finger
By the Ports of the Open Sea.

South by the bleak Bluff faring,
North where the Three Kings wait,
South-east the tempest daring—
Flight through the storm-tossed strait ;
Yonder a white-winged roamer
Struck where the rollers roar—
Where the great green froth-flaked comber
Breaks down on a black-ribbed shore.

For the South-east lands are dread lands
To the sailor in the shrouds,
Where the low clouds loom like headlands,
And the black bluffs blur like clouds.
When the breakers rage to windward
And the lights are masked a-lee,
And the sunken rocks run inward
To a Port of the Open Sea.

But oh ! for the South-east weather—
The sweep of the three-days' gale—
When, far through the flax and heather,
The spindrift drives like hail.
Glory to man's creations
That drive where the gale grows gruff,
When the homes of the sea-coast stations
Flash white from the dark'ning bluff !

When the swell of the South-east rouses
The wrath of the Maori sprite,
And the brown folk flee their houses
And crouch in the flax by night,
And wait as they long have waited—
In fear as the brown folk be—
The wave of destruction fated
For the Ports of the Open Sea.

.

Grey cloud to the mountain bases,
Wild boughs that rush and sweep ;
On the rounded hills the tussocks
Like flocks of flying sheep ;
A lonely storm-bird soaring
O'er tussock, fern and tree ;
And the boulder beaches roaring
The Hymn of the Open Sea.

THE THREE KINGS *

THE East is dead and the West is done, and again
our course lies thus :—

South-east by Fate and the Rising Sun where the
Three Kings wait for us.

*When our hearts are young and the world is wide, and
the heights seem grand to climb—*

*We are off and away to the Sydney-side ; but the Three
Kings bide their time.*

‘I’ve been to the West,’ the digger said : he was
bearded, bronzed and old :

‘Ah, the smothering curse of the East is wool, and
the curse of the West is gold.

‘I went to the West in the golden boom, with Hope
and a life-long mate,

‘They sleep in the sand by the Boulder Soak, and
long may the Three Kings wait.’

* Three sea-girt pinnacles off North Cape, New Zealand.

'I've had my fling on the Sydney-side,' said a black-sheep to the sea,

'Let the young fool learn when he can't be taught:
I've learnt what's good for me.'

And he gazed ahead on the sea-line dim—grown dim
in his softened eyes—

With a pain in his heart that was good for him—as
he saw the Three Kings rise.

A pale girl sits on the foc'sle head—she is back,
Three Kings! so soon;

But it seems to her like a life-time dead since she fled
with him 'saloon.'

There is refuge still in the old folks' arms for the child
that loved too well;

They will hide her shame on the Southern farm—and
the Three Kings will not tell.

'Twas a restless heart on the tide of life, and a false
star in the skies

That led me on to the deadly strife where the
Southern London lies;

But I dream in peace of a home for me, by a glorious
southern sound,

As the sunset fades from a moonlit sea, and the
Three Kings show us round.

*Our hearts are young and the old hearts old, and life on
the farms is slow,*

*And away in the world there is fame and gold—and the
Three Kings watch us go.*

*Our heads seem wise and the world seems wide, and its
heights are ours to climb,*

*So it's off and away in our youthful pride—but the
Three Kings bide our time.*

THE OUTSIDE TRACK

THERE were ten of us there on the moonlit quay,
And one on the for'ard hatch ;
No straighter mate to his mates than he
Had ever said : ' Len's a match !'
'Twill be long, old man, ere our glasses clink,
'Twill be long ere we grip your hand !—
And we dragged him ashore for a final drink
Till the whole wide world seemed grand.

For they marry and go as the world rolls back,
They marry and vanish and die ;
But their spirit shall live on the Outside Track
As long as the years go by.

The port-lights glowed in the morning mist
That rolled from the waters green ;
And over the railing we grasped his fist
As the dark tide came between.

We cheered the captain and cheered the crew,
And our mate, times out of mind ;
We cheered the land he was going to
And the land he had left behind.

We roared Lang Syne as a last farewell,
But my heart seemed out of joint ;
I well remember the hush that fell
When the steamer had passed the point
We drifted home through the public bars,
We were ten times less by one
Who sailed out under the morning stars,
And under the rising sun.

And one by one, and two by two,
They have sailed from the wharf since then ;
I have said good-bye to the last I knew,
The last of the careless men.
And I can't but think that the times we had
Were the best times after all,
As I turn aside with a lonely glass
And drink to the bar-room wall.

But I'll try my luck for a cheque Out Back,
Then a last good-bye to the bush ;
For my heart's away on the Outside Track,
On the track of the steerage push.

SYDNEY-SIDE

WHERE's the steward?—Bar-room steward? Berth?

Oh, any berth will do—

I have left a three-pound billet just to come along
with you.

Brighter shines the Star of Rovers on a world that's
growing wide,

But I think I'd give a kingdom for a glimpse of
Sydney-Side.

Run of rocky shelves at sunrise, with their base on
ocean's bed ;

Homes of Coogee, homes of Bondi, and the lighthouse
on South Head ;

For in loneliness and hardship—and with just a
touch of pride—

Has my heart been taught to whisper, ' You belong
to Sydney-Side.'

Oh, there never dawned a morning, in the long and
lonely days,

But I thought I saw the ferries streaming out across
the bays—

And as fresh and fair in fancy did the picture rise
again

As the sunrise flushed the city from Woollahra to
Balmain :

And the sunny water frothing round the liners black
and red,

And the coastal schooners working by the loom of
Bradley's Head ;

And the whistles and the sirens that re-echo far and
wide—

All the life and light and beauty that belong to
Sydney-Side.

And the dreary cloud-line never veiled the end of one
day more,

But the city set in jewels rose before me from 'The
Shore.'

Round the sea-world shine the beacons of a thousand
ports o' call,

But the harbour-lights of Sydney are the grandest of
them all !

Toiling out beyond Coolgardie—heart and back and
spirit broke,

Where the Rover's Star gleams redly in the desert by
the 'soak'—

But says one mate to the other, 'Brace your lip and
do not fret,

'We will laugh on trams and 'buses—Sydney's in the
same place yet.'

Working in the South in winter, to the waist in
dripping fern,

Where the local spirit hungers for each 'saxpence'
that we earn—

We can stand it for a season, for our world is
growing wide,

And they all are friends and strangers who belong to
Sydney-Side.

'T'other-siders ! 'T'other-siders !' Yet we wake the
dusty dead ;

It is we that send the backward province fifty years
ahead ;

We it is that 'trim' Australia—making narrow
country wide—

Yet we're always 'T'other-siders till we sail for
Sydney-side.

THE ROVERS

SOME born of homely parents
For ages settled down—
The steady generations
Of village, farm, and town :
And some of dusky fathers
Who wandered since the flood—
The fairest skin or darkest
Might hold the roving blood—

Some born of brutish peasants,
And some of dainty peers,
In poverty or plenty
They pass their early years ;
But, born in pride of purple,
Or straw and squalid sin,
In all the far world corners
The wanderers are kin.

A rover or a rebel,
Conceived and born to roam,
As babies they will toddle
With faces turned from home ;
They've fought beyond the vanguard
Wherever storm has raged,
And home is but a prison
They pace like lions caged.

They smile and are not happy ;
They sing and are not gay ;
They weary, yet they wander ;
They love, and cannot stay ;
They marry, and are single
Who watch the roving star,
For, by the family fireside,
Oh, lonely men *they* are !

They die of peace and quiet—
The deadly ease of life ;
They die of home and comfort ;
They *live* in storm and strife ;
No poverty can tie them,
Nor wealth nor place restrain—
Girl, wife, or child might draw them,
But they'll be gone again !

Across the glowing desert ;
Through naked trees and snow ;
Across the rolling prairies
The skies have seen them go ;
They fought to where the ocean
Receives the setting sun ;—
But where shall fight the rovers
When all the lands are won ?

They thirst on Greenland snowfields,
On Never-Never sands ;
Where man is not to conquer
They conquer barren lands ;
They feel that most are cowards,
That all depends on ' nerve,'
They lead who cannot follow,
They rule who cannot serve.

Across the plains and ranges,
Away across the seas,
On blue and green horizons
They camp by twos and threes ;
They hold on stormy borders
Of states that trouble earth
The honour of the country
That only gave them birth.

Unlisted, uncommissioned,
Untaught of any school,
In far-away world corners
Unconquered tribes they rule ;
The lone hand and revolver—
Sad eyes that never quail—
The lone hand and the rifle
That win where armies fail.

They slumber sound where murder
And treachery are bare—
The pluck of self-reliance,
The pluck of past despair ;
Thin brown men in pyjamas—
The thin brown wiry men !—
The helmet and revolver
That lie beside the pen.

Through drought and desolation
They won the way Out Back ;
The commonplace and selfish
Have followed on their track ;
They conquer lands for others,
For others find the gold,—
But where shall go the rovers
When all the lands are old ?

A rover and a rebel—

And so the worlds commence !

Their hearts shall beat as wildly

Ten generations hence ;

And when the world is crowded—

'Tis signed and sealed by Fate—

The roving blood will rise to make

The countries desolate.

FOREIGN LANDS

You may roam the wide seas over, follow, meet, and
cross the sun,

Sail as far as ships can sail, and travel far as trains
can run ;

You may ride and tramp wherever range or plain or
sea expands,

But the crowd has been before you, and you'll not
find ' Foreign Lands ;'

For the Early Days are over,

And no more the white-winged rover

Sinks the gale-worn coast of England bound for bays
in Foreign Lands.

Foreign Lands are in the distance dim and dream-
like, faint and far,

Long ago, and over yonder, where our boyhood
fancies are,

For the land is by the railway cramped as though
with iron bands,
And the steamship and the cable did away with
Foreign Lands.

Ah ! the days of blue and gold !

When the news was six months old—
But the news was worth the telling in the days of
Foreign Lands.

*Here we slave the dull years hopeless for the sake of Wool
and Wheat—*

*Here the homes of ugly Commerce—niggard farm and
haggard street ;*

*Yet our mothers and our fathers won the life the heart
demands—*

*Less than fifty years gone over, we were born in Foreign
Lands.*

When the gipsies stole the children still, in village
tale and song,

And the world was wide to travel, and the roving
spirit strong ;

When they dreamed of South Sea Islands, summer
seas and coral strands—

Then the bravest hearts of England sailed away to
Foreign Lands,
 ‘ Fitting foreign ’—flood and field—
 Half the world and orders sealed—
And the first and best of Europe went to fight in
Foreign Lands.

Canvas towers on the ocean—homeward bound and
 outward bound—
Glint of topsails over islands—splash of anchors in
 the sound ;
Then they landed in the forests, took their strong lives
 in their hands,
And they fought and toiled and conquered—making
 homes in Foreign Lands,
 Through the cold and through the drought—
 Further on and further out—
Winning half the world for England in the wilds of
Foreign Lands.

Love and pride of life inspired them when the simple
 village hearts
Followed Master Will and Harry—gone abroad to
 ‘ furrin parts ’—

By our townships and our cities, and across the desert
sands

Are the graves of those who fought and died for us
in Foreign Lands—

Gave their young lives for our sake

(Was it all a grand mistake?)

Sons of Master Will and Harry born abroad in
Foreign Lands !

*Ah, my girl, our lives are narrow, and in sordid days
like these,*

*I can hate the things that banished 'Foreign Lands
across the seas,'*

*But with all the world before us. God above us—hearts
and hands,*

I can sail the seas in fancy far away to Foreign Lands.

MARY LEMAINE

JIM DUFF was a 'native,' as wild as could be ;
A stealer and duffer of cattle was he,
But back in his youth he had stolen a pearl—
Or a diamond rather—the heart of a girl ;
She served with a squatter who lived on the plain,
And the name of the girl it was Mary Lemaine.

'Twas a drear, rainy day and the twilight was done,
When four mounted troopers rode up to the run.
They spoke to the squatter—he asked them all in.
The homestead was small and the walls they were thin ;
And in the next room, with a cold in her head,
Our Mary was sewing on buttons—in bed.

She heard a few words, but those words were
enough—

The troopers were all on the track of Jim Duff.

The super, his rival, was planning a trap
To capture the scamp in Maginnis's Gap.
'I've warned him before, and I'll do it again ;—
'*I'll save him to-night,*' whispered Mary Lemaine.

No petticoat job—there was no time to waste,
The suit she was mending she slipped on in haste,
And five minutes later they gathered in force,
But Mary was off, on the squatter's best horse ;
With your hand on your heart, just to deaden the
 pain,
Ride hard to the ranges, brave Mary Lemaine !

She rode by the ridges all sullen and strange,
And far up long gullies that ran through the range,
Till the rain cleared away, and the tears in her eyes
Caught the beams of the moon from Maginnis's Rise.
A fire in the depths of the gums she espied—
'Who's there ?' shouted Jim. 'It is Mary !' she cried.

Next morning the sun rose in splendour again,
And two loving sinners rode out on the plain ;
And baffled, and angry, and hungry and damp,
The four mounted troopers rode back to the camp.
But they hushed up the business—the reason is plain,
They all had been 'soft' on fair Mary Lemaine.

The squatter got back all he lost from his mob,
And old Sergeant Kennedy winked at the job;
Jim Duff keeps a shanty far out in the west,
And the sundowners call it the 'Bushranger's Rest.'
But the bushranger lives a respectable life,
And the law never troubles Jim Duff or his wife.

THE SHAKEDOWN ON THE FLOOR

SET me back for twenty summers—

For I'm tired of cities now—

Set my feet in red-soil furrows

And my hands upon the plough,

With the two 'Black Brothers' trudging

On the home stretch through the loam—

While, along the grassy siding,

Come the cattle grazing home.

And I finish ploughing early,

And I hurry home to tea—

There's my black suit on the stretcher,

And a clean white shirt for me ;

There's a dance at Rocky Rises,

And, when all the fun is o'er,

For a certain favoured party

There's a shake-down on the floor.

You remember Mary Carey,
 Bushmen's favourite at the Rise ?
With her sweet small freckled features,
 Red-gold hair, and kind grey eyes ;
Sister, daughter, to her mother,
 Mother, sister, to the rest—
And of all my friends and kindred,
 Mary Carey loved me best.

Far too shy, because she loved me,
 To be dancing oft with me ;
What cared I, because she loved me,
 If the world were there to see ?
But we lingered by the slip rails
 While the rest were riding home,
Ere the hour before the dawning,
 Dimmed the great star-clustered dome.

Small brown hands that spread the mattress
 While the old folk winked to see
How she'd find an extra pillow
 And an extra sheet for me.
For a moment shyly smiling,
 She would grant me one kiss more—
Slip away and leave me happy
 By the shake-down on the floor.

Rock me hard in steerage cabins,
 Rock me soft in wide saloons,
Lay me on the sand-hill lonely
 Under waning western moons ;
But wherever night may find me
 Till I rest for evermore—
I will dream that I am happy
 On the shake-down on the floor.

Ah ! she often watched at sunset—
 For her people told me so —
Where I left her at the slip-rails
 More than fifteen years ago.
And she faded like a flower,
 And she died, as such girls do,
While, away in Northern Queensland,
 Working hard, I never knew.

And we suffer for our sorrows,
 And we suffer for our joys,
From the old bush days when mother
 Spread the shake-down for the boys.
But to cool the living fever,
 Comes a cold breath to my brow,
And I feel that Mary's spirit
 Is beside me, even now.

REEDY RIVER

TEN miles down Reedy River
A pool of water lies,
And all the year it mirrors
The changes in the skies,
And in that pool's broad bosom
Is room for all the stars ;
Its bed of sand has drifted
O'er countless rocky bars.

Around the lower edges
There waves a bed of reeds,
Where water rats are hidden
And where the wild duck breeds ;
And grassy slopes rise gently
To ridges long and low,
Where groves of wattle flourish
And native bluebells grow.

Beneath the granite ridges
The eye may just discern
Where Rocky Creek emerges
From deep green banks of fern ;
And standing tall between them,
The grassy sheoaks cool
The hard, blue-tinted waters
Before they reach the pool.

Ten miles down Reedy River
One Sunday afternoon,
I rode with Mary Campbell
To that broad bright lagoon ;
We left our horses grazing
Till shadows climbed the peak,
And strolled beneath the sheoaks
On the banks of Rocky Creek.

Then home along the river
That night we rode a race,
And the moonlight lent a glory
To Mary Campbell's face ;
And I pleaded for my future
All thro' that moonlight ride,
Until our weary horses
Drew closer side by side.

REEDY RIVER

Ten miles from Ryan's crossing
And five below the peak,
I built a little homestead
On the banks of Rocky Creek ;
I cleared the land and fenced it
And ploughed the rich red loam,
And my first crop was golden
When I brought Mary home.

.

Now still down Reedy River
The grassy sheoaks sigh,
And the waterholes still mirror
The pictures in the sky ;
And over all for ever
Go sun and moon and stars,
While the golden sand is drifting
Across the rocky bars ;

But of the hut I builded
There are no traces now.
And many rains have levelled
The furrows of the plough ;
And my bright days are olden,
For the twisted branches wave
And the wattle blossoms golden
On the hill by Mary's grave.

OLD STONE CHIMNEY

THE rising moon on the peaks was blending
Her silver light with the sunset glow,
When a swagman came as the day was ending
Along a path that he seemed to know.
But all the fences were gone or going—
The hand of ruin was everywhere ;
The creek unchecked in its course was flowing,
For none of the old clay dam was there.

Here Time had been with his swiftest changes,
And husbandry had westward flown ;
The cattle tracks in the rugged ranges
Were long ago with the scrub o'ergrown.
It must have needed long years to soften
The road, that as hard as rock had been ;
The mountain path he had trod so often
Lay hidden now with a carpet green.

He thought at times from the mountain courses

He heard the sound of a bullock bell,

The distant gallop of stockmen's horses,

The stockwhip's crack that he knew so well :

But these were sounds of his memory only,

And they were gone from the flat and hill,

For when he listened the place was lonely,

The range was dumb and the bush was still.

The swagman paused by the gap and faltered,

For down the gully he feared to go,

The scene in memory never altered—

The scene before him had altered so.

But hope is strong, and his heart grew bolder,

And over his sorrows he raised his head,

He turned his swag to the other shoulder,

And plodded on with a firmer tread.

Ah, hope is always the keenest hearer,

And fancies much when assailed by fear ;

The swagman thought, as the farm drew nearer,

He heard the sounds that he used to hear.

His weary heart for a moment bounded,

For a moment brief he forgot his dread ;

For plainly still in his memory sounded

The welcome bark of a dog long dead.

A few steps more and his face grew ghostly,
 Then white as death in the twilight grey ;
 Deserted wholly, and ruined mostly,
 The Old Selection before him lay.
 Like startled spectres that paused and listened,
 The few white posts of the stockyard stood ;
 And seemed to move as the moonlight glistened
 And paled again on the whitened wood.

And thus he came, from a life long banished
 To other lands, and of peace bereft,
 To find the farm and the homestead vanished,
 And only the old stone chimney left.
 The field his father had cleared and gardened
 Was overgrown with saplings now ;
 The rain had set and the drought had hardened
 The furrows made by a vanished plough.

And this, and this was the longed-for haven
 Where he might rest from a life of woe ;
 He read a name on the mantel graven—
 The name was his ere he stained it so.
 ‘ And so remorse on my care encroaches—
 ‘ I have not suffered enough,’ he said ;
 ‘ That name is pregnant with deep reproaches—
 ‘ The past won’t bury dishonoured dead ! ’

Ah, now he knew it was long years after,
And felt how swiftly a long year speeds ;
The hardwood post and the beam and rafter
Had rotted long in the tangled weeds.
He found that time had for years been sowing
The coarse wild scrub on the homestead path,
And saw young trees by the chimney growing,
And mountain ferns on the wide stone hearth.

He wildly thought of the evil courses
That brought disgrace on his father's name ;
The escort robbed, and the stolen horses,
The felon's dock with its lasting shame.
' Ah, God ! Ah, God ! is there then no pardon ?'
He cried in a voice that was strained and hoarse ;
He fell on the weeds that were once a garden,
And sobbed aloud in his great remorse.

But grief must end, and his heart ceased aching
When pitying sleep to his eye-lids crept,
And home and friends who were lost in waking,
They all came back while the stockman slept.
And when he woke on the empty morrow,
The pain at his heart was a deadened pain ;
And bravely bearing his load of sorrow,
He wandered back to the world again.

SONG OF THE OLD BULLOCK-DRIVER

FAR back in the days when the blacks used to ramble

In long single file 'neath the evergreen tree,

The wool-teams in season came down from Coonamble,

And journeyed for weeks on their way to the sea.

'Twas then that our hearts and our sinews were
stronger,

For those were the days when the bushman was
bred.

We journeyed on roads that were rougher and longer

Than roads where the feet of our grandchildren
tread.

With mates who have gone to the great Never-
Never,

And mates whom I've not seen for many a day,

I camped on the banks of the Cudgegong River

And yarned at the fire by the old bullock-dray.

I would summon them back from the far Riverina,
From days that shall be from all others distinct,
And sing to the sound of an old concertina
Their rugged old songs where strange fancies were
linked.

We never were lonely, for, camping together,
We yarned and we smoked the long evenings away,
And little I cared for the signs of the weather
When snug in my hammock slung under the dray.
We rose with the dawn, were it ever so chilly,
When yokes and tarpaulins were covered with
frost,
And toasted the bacon and boiled the black billy,
Where high on the camp-fire the branches were
tossed.

On flats where the air was suggestive of 'possums,
And homesteads and fences were hinting of change,
We saw the faint glimmer of appletree blossoms,
And far in the distance the blue of the range ;
And here in the rain, there was small use in flogging
The poor, tortured bullocks that tugged at the
load,
When down to the axles the waggon's were bogging
And traffic was making a marsh of the road.

'Twas hard on the beasts on the terrible pinches,
Where two teams of bullocks were yoked to a load,
And tugging and slipping, and moving by inches,
Half-way to the summit they clung to the road.
And then, when the last of the pinches was bested,
(You'll surely not say that a glass was a sin ?)
The bullocks lay down 'neath the gum trees and
rested—

The bullockies steered for the bar of the inn.

Then slowly we crawled by the trees that kept tally
Of miles that were passed on the long journey
down.

We saw the wild beauty of Capertee Valley,
As slowly we rounded the base of the Crown.
But, ah ! the poor bullocks were cruelly goaded
While climbing the hills from the flats and the
vales ;

'Twas here that the teams were so often unloaded
That all knew the meaning of ' counting your bales.'

And, oh ! but the best-paying load that I carried
Was one to the run where my sweetheart was
nurse.

We courted awhile, and agreed to get married,
And couple our futures for better or worse.

And as my old feet grew too weary to drag on
The miles of rough metal they met by the way,
My eldest grew up and I gave him the waggon—
He's plodding along by the bullocks to-day.

THE LIGHTS OF COBB AND CO.

FIRE LIGHTED, on the table a meal for sleepy men,
A lantern in the stable, a jingle now and then ;
The mail coach looming darkly by light of moon
and star,

The growl of sleepy voices—a candle in the bar ;
A stumble in the passage of folk with wits abroad ;
A swear-word from a bedroom—the shout of ‘All
aboard !’

‘Tchk-tchk ! Git-up !’ ‘Hold fast, there !’ and
down the range we go ;

Five hundred miles of scattered camps will watch for
Cobb and Co.

Old coaching towns already ‘decaying for their sins,’
Uncounted ‘Half-Way Houses,’ and scores of ‘Ten
Mile Inns ;’

The riders from the stations by lonely granite peaks ;

The black-boy for the shepherds on sheep and cattle
creeks ;

The roaring camps of Gulgong, and many a ' Digger's
Rest ;'

The diggers on the Lachlan ; the huts of Furthest
West ;

Some twenty thousand exiles who sailed for weal or
woe ;

The bravest hearts of twenty lands will wait for Cobb
and Co.

The morning star has vanished, the frost and fog are
gone,

In one of those grand mornings which but on moun-
tains dawn ;

A flask of friendly whisky—each other's hopes we
share—

And throw our top-coats open to drink the mountain
air.

The roads are rare to travel, and life seems all com-
plete ;

The grind of wheels on gravel, the trot of horses' feet,
The trot, trot, trot and canter, as down the spur we go—
The green sweeps to horizons blue that call for Cobb
and Co.

We take a bright girl actress through western dust
and damps,

To bear the home-world message, and sing for sinful
camps,

To wake the hearts and break them, wild hearts that
hope and ache—

(Ah ! when she thinks of *those* days her own must
nearly break !)

Five miles this side the gold-field, a loud, triumphant
shout :

Five hundred cheering diggers have snatched the
horses out :

With 'Auld Lang Syne' in chorus through roaring
camps they go—

That cheer for her, and cheer for Home, and cheer
for Cobb and Co.

Three lamps above the ridges and gorges dark and
deep,

A flash on sandstone cuttings where sheer the sidings
sweep,

A flash on shrouded waggons, on water ghastly
white;

Weird bush and scattered remnants of 'rushes in
the night ;'

Across the swollen river a flash beyond the ford :

‘ Ride hard to warn the driver ! He’s drunk or mad,
good Lord ! ’

But on the bank to westward a broad, triumphant
glow—

A hundred miles shall see to-night the lights of Cobb
and Co. !

Swift scramble up the siding where teams climb inch
by inch ;

Pause, bird-like, on the summit—then breakneck
down the pinch

Past haunted half-way houses—where convicts made
the bricks—

Scrub-yards and new bark shanties, we dash with five
and six—

By clear, ridge-country rivers, and gaps where tracks
run high,

Where waits the lonely horseman, cut clear against
the sky ;

Through stringy-bark and blue-gum, and box and
pine we go ;

New camps are stretching ’cross the plains the routes
of Cobb and Co.

.

Throw down the reins, old driver—there's no one left
to shout ;

The ruined inn's survivor must take the horses out.

A poor old coach hereafter!—we're lost to all such
things—

No bursts of songs or laughter shall shake your
leathern springs

When creeping in unnoticed by railway sidings
drear,

Or left in yards for lumber, decaying with the year—

Oh, who'll think how in those days when distant
fields were broad

You raced across the Lachlan side with twenty-five
on board.

Not all the ships that sail away since Roaring Days
are done—

Not all the boats that steam from port, nor all the
trains that run,

Shall take such hopes and loyal hearts—for men shall
never know

Such days as when the Royal Mail was run by Cobb
and Co.

The 'greyhounds' race across the sea, the 'special'
cleaves the haze,

But these seem dull and slow to me compared with
Roaring Days !

The eyes that watched are dim with age, and souls
are weak and slow,

The hearts are dust or hardened now that broke for
Cobb and Co.

HOW THE LAND WAS WON

THE future was dark and the past was dead
As they gazed on the sea once more—
But a nation was born when the immigrants said
‘Good-bye!’ as they stepped ashore!
In their loneliness they were parted thus
Because of the work to do,
A wild wide land to be won for us
By hearts and hands so few.

The darkest land 'neath a blue sky's dome,
And the widest waste on earth;
The strangest scenes and the least like home
In the lands of our fathers' birth;
The loneliest land in the wide world then,
And away on the furthest seas,
A land most barren of life for men—
And they won it by twos and threes!

With God, or a dog, to watch, they slept
By the camp-fires' ghastly glow,
Where the scrubs were dark as the blacks that crept
With 'nulla' and spear held low ;
Death was hidden amongst the trees,
And bare on the glaring sand
They fought and perished by twos and threes—
And that's how they won the land !

It was two that failed by the dry creek bed,
While one reeled on alone—
The dust of Australia's greatest dead
With the dust of the desert blown !
Gaunt cheek-bones cracking the parchment skin
That scorched in the blazing sun,
Black lips that broke in a ghastly grin—
And that's how the land was won !

Starvation and toil on the tracks they went,
And death by the lonely way ;
The childbirth under the tilt or tent,
The childbirth under the dray !
The childbirth out in the desolate hut
With a half-wild gin for nurse—
That's how the first were born to bear
The brunt of the first man's curse !

They toiled and they fought through the shame of it—

Through wilderness, flood, and drought ;

They worked, in the struggles of early days,

Their sons' salvation out.

The white girl-wife in the hut alone,

The men on the boundless run,

The miseries suffered, unvoiced, unknown—

And that's how the land was won.

No armchair rest for the old folk then—

But, ruined by blight and drought,

They blazed the tracks to the camps again

In the big scrubs further out.

The worn haft, wet with a father's sweat,

Gripped hard by the eldest son,

The boy's back formed to the hump of toil —

And that's how the land was won !

And beyond Up Country, beyond Out Back,

And the rainless belt, they ride,

The currency lad and the ne'er-do-weel

And the black sheep, side by side ;

In wheeling horizons of endless haze

That disk through the Great North-west,

They ride for ever by twos and by threes—

And that's how they win the rest.

THE BOSS OVER THE BOARD

WHEN he's over a rough and unpopular shed,
With the sins of the bank and the men on his head ;
When he musn't look black or indulge in a grin,
And thirty or forty men hate him like Sin—
I am moved to admit—when the total is scored—
That it's just a bit off for the Boss-of-the-board.

I have battled a lot,
But my dream's never soared
To the lonely position of Boss-of-the-board.

'Twas a black-listed shed down the Darling : the
Boss
Was a small man to see—though a big man to
cross—
We had nought to complain of—except what we
thought,
And the Boss didn't boss any more than he ought ;

But the Union was booming, and Brotherhood soared,
So we hated like poison the Boss-of-the-board.

We could tolerate 'hands'—

We respected the cook ;

But the name of a Boss was a blot in our book.

He'd a row with Big Duggan—a rough sort of
Jim—

Or, rather, Jim Duggan was 'laying for' him !

His hate of Injustice and Greed was so deep

That his shearing grew rough—and he ill-used the
sheep.

And I fancied that Duggan his manliness lower'd

When he took off his shirt to the Boss-of-the-board,

For the Boss was ten stone,

And the shearer full-grown,

And he might have, they said, let the crawler
alone.

Though some of us there wished the fight to the
strong,

Yet we knew in our hearts that the shearer was
wrong.

And the crawler was plucky, it can't be denied,

For he had to fight Freedom and Justice beside,

But he came up so gamely, as often as floored,
That a blackleg stood up for the Boss-of-the-board !
And the fight was a sight,
And we pondered that night—
'It's surprising how some of those blacklegs can
fight !'

Next day at the office, when sadly the wreck
Of Jim Duggan came up like a lamb for his cheque,
Said the Boss, 'Don't be childish ! It's all past and
gone ;
'I am short of good shearers. You'd *better* stay on.'
And we fancied Jim Duggan *our* dignity lower'd
When he stopped to oblige a damned Boss-of-the-
board.

We said nothing to Jim,
For a joke might be grim,
And the subject, we saw, was distasteful to him.

The Boss just went on as he'd done from the first,
And he favoured Big Duggan no more than the
worst ;
And when we'd cut out and the steamer came
down—
With the hawkers and spielers—to take us to town,

And we'd all got aboard, 'twas Jim Duggan, good
Lord!

Who yelled for three cheers for the Boss-of-the-board.

'Twas a bit off, no doubt—

And with Freedom about—

But a lot is forgot when a shed is cut out.

With Freedom of Contract maintained in his shed,
And the curse of the Children of Light on his head,
He's apt to long sadly for sweetheart or wife,
And his views be inclined to the dark side of life.
The Truth must be spread and the Cause must be
shored—

But it's just a bit rough on the Boss-of-the-board.

I am all for the Right,

But perhaps (out of sight)

As a son or a husband or father he's white.

WHEN THE LADIES COME TO THE SHEARING SHED

‘THE ladies are coming,’ the super says
To the shearers sweltering there,
And ‘the ladies’ means in the shearing shed :
‘Don’t cut ’em too bad. Don’t swear.’
The ghost of a pause in the shed’s rough heart,
And lower is bowed each head ;
And nothing is heard, save a whispered word,
And the roar of the shearing-shed.

The tall, shy rouser has lost his wits,
And his limbs are all astray ;
He leaves a fleece on the shearing-board,
And his broom in the shearers’ way.
There’s a curse in store for that jackaroo
As down by the wall he slants—
And the ringer bends with his legs askew
And wishes he’d ‘patched them pants.’

They are girls from the city. (Our hearts rebel
As we squint at their dainty feet.)
And they gush and say in a girly way
That 'the dear little lambs' are 'sweet.'
And Bill, the ringer, who'd scorn the use
Of a childish word like 'damn,'
Would give a pound that his tongue were loose
As he tackles a lively lamb.

Swift thoughts of homes in the coastal towns—
Or rivers and waving grass—
And a weight on our hearts that we cannot define
That comes as the ladies pass.
But the rouser ventures a nervous dig
In the ribs of the next to him ;
And Barcoo says to his pen-mate : 'Twig
'The style of the last un, Jim.'

Jim Moonlight gives her a careless glance—
Then he catches his breath with pain—
His strong hand shakes and the sunlights dance
As he bends to his work again.
But he's well disguised in a bristling beard,
Bronzed skin, and his shearers' dress ;
And whatever Jim Moonlight hoped or feared
Were hard for his mates to guess.

Jim Moonlight, wiping his broad, white brow,
Explains, with a doleful smile :
' A stitch in the side,' and ' he's all right now '—
But he leans on the beam awhile,
And gazes out in the blazing noon
On the clearing, brown and bare—
She has come and gone, like a breath of June,
In December's heat and glare.

The bushmen are big rough boys at the best,
With hearts of a larger growth ;
But they hide those hearts with a brutal jest,
And the pain with a reckless oath.
Though the Bills and Jims of the bush-bard sing
Of their life loves, lost or dead,
The love of a girl is a sacred thing
Not voiced in a shearing-shed.

THE BALLAD OF THE ROUSEABOUT

A ROUSEABOUT of rouseabouts, from any land—or
none—

I bear a nick-name of the bush, and I'm—a woman's
son ;

I came from where I camp'd last night, and, at the
day-dawn glow,

I rub the darkness from my eyes, roll up my swag,
and go.

Some take the track for bitter pride, some for no
pride at all—

(But—to us all the world is wide when driven
to the wall)

Some take the track for gain in life, some take the
track for loss—

And some of us take up the swag as Christ took up
the Cross.

Some take the track for faith in men—some take the
track for doubt—

Some flee a squalid home to work their own salvation
out.

Some dared not see a mother's tears nor meet a
father's face—

Born of good Christian families some leap, head-long,
from Grace.

Oh we are men who fought and rose, or fell from
many grades ;

Some born to lie, and some to pray, we're men of
many trades ;

We're men whose fathers were and are of high and
lôw degree—

The sea was open to us and we sailed across the
sea.

And—were our quarrels wrong or just?—has no
place in my song—

We seared our souls in puzzling as to what was right
or wrong ;

We judge not and we are not judged—'tis our
philosophy—

There's something wrong with every ship that sails
upon the sea.

From shearing shed to shearing shed we tramp to
make a cheque—

Jack Cornstalk and the ne'er-do-weel—the tar-boy
and the wreck.

We learn the worth of man to man—and this we
learn too well—

The shanty and the shearing shed are warmer spots
in hell !

I've humped my swag to Bawley Plain, and further
out and on ;

I've boiled my billy by the Gulf, and boiled it by the
Swan—

I've thirsted in dry lignum swamps, and thirsted on
the sand,

And eked the fire with camel dung in Never-Never
Land.

I know the track from Spencer's Gulf and north of
Cooper's Creek—

Where falls the half-caste to the strong, 'black velvet'
to the weak—

(From gold-top Flossie in the Strand to half-caste and
the gin—

If they had brains, poor animals ! we'd teach them
how to sin.)

I've tramped, and camped, and 'shore' and drunk
with many mates Out Back—

And every one to me is Jack because the first was
Jack—

A 'lifer' sneaked from jail at home—the 'straightest'
mate I met—

A 'ratty' Russian Nihilist—a British Baronet !

I know the tucker tracks that feed—or leave one in
the lurch—

The 'Burgoo' (Presbyterian) track—the 'Murphy'
(Roman Church)—

But more the *man*, and not the *track*, so much as it
appears,

For 'battling' is a trade to learn, and I've served
seven years.

We're haunted by the past at times—and this is very
bad,

And so we drink till horrors come, lest, sober, we go
mad—

So much is lost Out Back, so much of hell is
realised—

A man might skin himself alive and no one be
surprised.

A rouseabout of rouseabouts, above—beneath regard,
I know how soft is this old world, and I have learnt
how hard—

A rouseabout of rouseabouts—I know what men can
feel,

I've seen the tears from hard eyes slip as drops from
polished steel.

I learned what college had to teach, and in the school
of men

By camp-fires I have learned, or, say, unlearned it all
again ;

But this I've learned, that truth is strong, and if a
man go straight

He'll live to see his enemy struck down by time and
fate !

We hold him true who's true to one however false
he be

(There's something wrong with every ship that lies
beside the quay) ;

We lend and borrow, laugh and joke, and when the
past is drowned,

We sit upon our swags and smoke and watch the
world go round.

YEARS AFTER THE WAR IN AUSTRALIA

THE big rough boys from the runs out back were first
where the balls flew free,
And yelled in the slang of the Outside Track : ‘ By
God, it’s a Christmas spree ! ’
‘ It’s not too rusty ’—and ‘ Wool away !—stand clear
of the blazing shoots ! ’—
‘ Sheep O ! Sheep O ! ’—‘ We’ll cut out to-day ’—
‘ Look out for the boss’s boots ! ’—
‘ What price the tally in camp to-night ! ’—‘ What
price the boys Out Back ! ’—
‘ Go it, you tigers, for Right or Might and the pride
of the Outside Track ! ’—
‘ Needle and thread ! ’—‘ I have broke my comb ! ’—
‘ Now ride, you flour-bags, ride ! ’—
‘ Fight for your mates and the folk at home ! ’—
‘ Here’s for the Lachlan side ! ’

Those men of the West would sneer and scoff at the
gates of hell ajar,
And oft the sight of a head cut off was hailed by a
yell for 'Tar !'

.

I heard the push in the Red Redoubt, irate at a
luckless shot :

'Look out for the blooming shell, look out !'—'Gor'
bli' me, but that's red-hot !'—

'It's Bill the Slogger—poor bloke—he's done. A
chunk of the shell was his ;

'I wish the beggar that fired that gun could get
within reach of Liz.'

'Those foreign gunners will give us rats, but I wish
it was Bill they missed.'

'I'd like to get at their bleeding hats with a rock in
my (something) fist.'

'Hold up, Billy ; I'll stick to you ; they've hit you
under the belt ;

'If we get the waddle I'll swag you through, if the
blazing mountains melt ;

'You remember the night when the traps got me for
stoushing a bleeding Chow,

‘And you went for ’em proper and laid out three, and I won’t forget it now.’

And, groaning and swearing, the pug replied : ‘I’m done . . . they’ve knocked me out !

‘I’d fight them all for a pound a-side, from the boss to the rouseabout.

‘My nut is cracked and my legs is broke, and it gives me worse than hell ;

‘I trained for a scrap with a twelve-stone bloke, and not with a bursting shell.

‘You needn’t mag, for I knowed, old chum, I *knowed*, old pal, you’d stick ;

‘But you can’t hold out till the reg’lars come, and you’d best be nowhere quick.

‘They’ve got a force and a gun ashore, both of our wings is broke ;

‘They’ll storm the ridge in a minute more, and the best you can do is smoke.’

And Jim exclaimed : ‘You can smoke, you chaps, but me—Gor’ bli’ me, no !

‘The push that ran from the George-street traps won’t run from a foreign foe.

‘I’ll stick to the gun while she makes them sick, and I’ll stick to what’s left of Bill.’

And they hiss through their blackened teeth : ‘ We’ll
stick ! by the blazing flame, we will ! ’

And long years after the war was past, they told in
the town and bush

How the ridge of death to the bloody last was held
by a Sydney push ;

How they fought to the end in a sheet of flame, how
they fought with their rifle-stocks,

And earned, in a nobler sense, the name of their
ancient ‘ weapons—‘ rocks.’

.

In the western camps it was ever our boast, when
’twas bad for the kangaroo :

‘ If the enemy’s forces take the coast, they must take
the mountains, too ;

‘ They may force their way by the western line or
round by a northern track,

‘ But they won’t run short of a decent spree with the
men who are left out back ! ’

When we burst the enemy’s ironclads and won by a
run of luck,

We whooped as loudly as Nelson’s lads when a
French three-decker struck ;

64 YEARS AFTER THE WAR IN AUSTRALIA

And when the enemy's troops prevailed the truth
was never heard—

We lied like heroes who never failed explaining how
that occurred.

You bushmen sneer in the old bush way at the new-
chum jackeroo,

But 'cuffs-'n'-collers' were out that day, and they
stuck to their posts like glue;

I never believed that a dude could fight till a Johnny
led us then;

We buried his bits in the rear that night for the
honour of George-street men.

And Jim the Ringer—he fought, he did. The
regiment nicknamed Jim,

'Old Heads a Caser' and 'Heads a Quid,' but it
never was 'tails' with him.

The way that he rode was a racing rhyme, and the
way that he finished grand;

He backed the enemy every time, and died in a
hand-to-hand!

.
I'll never forget when the ringer and I were first in
the Bush Brigade,

With Warrego Bill, from the Live-till-you-Die, in the
last grand charge we made.

And Billy died—he was full of sand—he said, as I raised his head :

‘I’m full of love for my native land, but a lot too full of lead.

‘Tell ‘em,’ said Billy, ‘and tell old dad, to look after the cattle pup ;’

But his eyes grew bright, though his voice was sad, and he said, as I held him up :

‘I have been happy on western farms. And once, when I first went wrong,

‘Around my neck were the trembling arms of the girl I’d loved so long.

‘Far out on the southern seas I’ve sailed, and ridden where brumbies roam,

‘And oft, when all on the station failed, I’ve driven the outlaw home.

‘I’ve spent a cheque in a day and night, and I’ve made a cheque as quick ;

‘I struck a nugget when times were tight, and the stores had stopped our tick.

‘I’ve led the field on the old bay mare, and I hear the cheering still,

‘When mother and sister and *she* were there, and the old man yelled for Bill ;

‘But, save for *her*, could I live my while again in
the old bush way,

‘I’d give it all for the last half-mile in the race we
rode to-day!’

And he passed away as the stars came out—he died
as old heroes die—

I heard the sound of the distant rout, and the
Southern Cross was high.

THE OLD JIMMY WOODSER

THE old Jimmy Woodser comes into the bar,
Unwelcomed, unnoticed, unknown,
Too old and too odd to be drunk with, by far ;
And he glides to the end where the lunch baskets are
And they say that he tipples alone.

His frock-coat is green and the nap is no more,
And the style of his hat is at rest.
He wears the peaked collar our grandfathers wore,
The black-ribboned tie that was legal of yore,
And the coat buttoned over his breast.

When first he came in, for a moment I thought
That my vision or wits were astray ;
For a picture and page out of Dickens he brought,
'Twas an old file dropped in from the Chancery Court
To a wine-vault just over the way.

But I dreamed as he tasted his bitters to-night,
And the lights in the bar-room grew dim,
That the shades of the friends of that other day's light,
And of girls that were bright in our grandfathers'
sight,
Lifted shadowy glasses to him.

And I opened the door as the old man passed out,
With his short, shuffling step and bowed head ;
And I sighed, for I felt as I turned me about,
An odd sense of respect—born of whisky no doubt—
For the life that was fifty years dead.

And I thought—there are times when our memory
trends

Through the future, as 'twere, on its own—
That I, out of date ere my pilgrimage ends,
In a new fashioned bar to dead loves and dead friends
Might drink like the old man alone :
While they whisper, ' He boozes alone.'

THE CHRIST OF THE 'NEVER'

WITH eyes that seem shrunken to pierce
To the awful horizons of land,
Through the haze of hot days, and the fierce
White heat-waves that flow on the sand ;
Through the Never Land westward and nor'ward,
Bronzed, bearded and gaunt on the track,
Quiet-voiced and hard-knuckled, rides forward
The Christ of the Outer Out-back.

For the cause that will ne'er be relinquished
Spite of all the great cynics on earth—
In the ranks of the bush undistinguished
By manner or dress—if by birth—
God's preacher, of churches unheeded—
God's vineyard, though barren the sod—
Plain spokesman where spokesman is needed—
Rough link 'twixt the bushman and God.

He works where the hearts of all nations
Are withered in flame from the sky,
Where the sinners work out their salvations
In a hell-upon-earth ere they die.
In the camp or the lonely hut lying
In a waste that seems out of God's sight,
He's the doctor—the mate of the dying
Through the smothering heat of the night.

By his work in the hells of the shearers,
Where the drinking is ghastly and grim,
Where the roughest and worst of his hearers
Have listened bareheaded to him.
By his paths through the parched desolation
Hot rides and the terrible tramps ;
By the hunger, the thirst, the privation
Of his work in the furthestmost camps ;

By his worth in the light that shall search men
And prove—ay ! and justify each—
I place him in front of all churchmen
Who feel not, who *know* not—but preach !

THE CATTLE-DOG'S DEATH

THE plains lay bare on the homeward route,
And the march was heavy on man and brute ;
For the Spirit of Drouth was on all the land,
And the white heat danced on the glowing sand.

The best of our cattle-dogs lagged at last,
His strength gave out ere the plains were passed,
And our hearts grew sad when he crept and laid
His languid limbs in the nearest shade.

He saved our lives in the years gone by,
When no one dreamed of the danger nigh,
And the treacherous blacks in the darkness crept
On the silent camp where the drovers slept.

‘The dog is dying,’ a stockman said,
As he knelt and lifted the shaggy head ;
‘Tis a long day’s march ere the run be near,
‘And he’s dying fast ; shall we leave him here ?’

But the super cried, 'There's an answer there !'
As he raised a tuft of the dog's grey hair ;
And, strangely vivid, each man descried
The old spear-mark on the shaggy hide.

We laid a ' bluey ' and coat across
The camping pack of the lightest horse,
And raised the dog to his deathbed high,
And brought him far 'neath the burning sky.

At the kindly touch of the stockmen rude
His eyes grew human with gratitude ;
And though we parched in the heat that fags,
We gave him the last of the water-bags.

The super's daughter we knew would chide
If we left the dog in the desert wide ;
So we brought him far o'er the burning sand
For a parting stroke of her small white hand.

But long ere the station was seen ahead,
His pain was o'er, for the dog was dead ;
And the folks all knew by our looks of gloom
'Twas a comrade's corpse that we carried home.

THE SONG OF THE DARLING RIVER

The only national work of the blacks was a dam or dyke of stones across the Darling River at Brewarrina. The stones they carried from Lord knows where—and the Lord knows how. The people of Bourke kept up navigation for months above the town by a dam of sand-bags. The Darling rises in blazing droughts from the Queensland rains. There are banks and beds of good clay and rock along the river.

THE skies are brass and the plains are bare,
Death and ruin are everywhere—
And all that is left of the last year's flood
Is a sickly stream on the grey-black mud ;
The salt-springs bubble and quagmires quiver,
And—this is the dirge of the Darling River :

‘I rise in the drought from the Queensland rain,
‘I fill my branches again and again ;
‘I hold my billabongs back in vain,
‘For my life and my peoples the South Seas drain ;
‘And the land grows old and the people never
‘Will see the worth of the Darling River.

‘ I drown dry gullies and lave bare hills,
‘ I turn drought-ruts into rippling rills—
‘ I form fair island and glades all green
‘ Till every bend is a sylvan scene.
‘ I have watered the barren land ten leagues wide !
‘ But in vain I have tried, ah ! in vain I have tried
‘ To show the sign of the Great All Giver,
‘ The Word to a people : O ! lock your river.

‘ I want no blistering barge aground,
‘ But racing steamers the seasons round ;
‘ I want fair homes on my lonely ways,
‘ A people’s love and a people’s praise—
‘ And rosy children to dive and swim—
‘ And fair girls’ feet in my rippling brim ;
‘ And cool, green forests and gardens ever ’—
Oh, this is the hymn of the Darling River.

*The sky is brass and the scrub-lands glare,
Death and ruin are everywhere ;
Thrown high to bleach, or deep in the mud
The bones lie buried by last year’s flood.
And the Demons dance from the Never Never
To laugh at the rise of the Darling River.*

RAIN IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE valley's full of misty cloud,
 Its tinted beauty drowning,
The Eucalypti roar aloud,
 The mountain fronts are frowning.

The mist is hanging like a pall
 From many granite ledges,
And many a little waterfall
 Starts o'er the valley's edges.

The sky is of a leaden grey,
 Save where the north is surly, .
The driven daylight speeds away,
 And night comes o'er us early.

But, love, the rain will pass full soon,
 Far sooner than my sorrow,
And in a golden afternoon
 The sun may set to-morrow.

A MAY NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAINS

'Tis a wonderful time when these hours begin,
These long 'small hours' of night,
When grass is crisp, and the air is thin,
And the stars come close and bright.
The moon hangs caught in a silvery veil,
From clouds of a steely grey,
And the hard, cold blue of the sky grows pale
In the wonderful Milky Way.

There is something wrong with this star of ours,
A mortal plank unsound,
That cannot be charged to the mighty powers
Who guide the stars around.
Though man is higher than bird or beast,
Though wisdom is still his boast,
He surely resembles Nature least,
And the things that vex her most.

Oh, say, some muse of a larger star,
Some muse of the Universe,
If they who people those planets far
Are better than we, or worse ?
Are they exempted from deaths and births,
And have they greater powers,
And greater heavens, and greater earths,
And greater Gods than ours ?

Are our lies theirs, and our truth their truth,
Are they cursed for pleasure's sake,
Do they make their hells in their reckless youth
Ere they know what hells they make ?
And do they toil through each weary hour
Till the tedious day is o'er,
For food that gives but the fleeting power
To toil and strive for more ?

THE NEW CHUM JACKAROO

LET bushmen think as bushmen will,
And say whate'er they choose,
I hate to hear the stupid sneer
At New Chum Jackaroos.

He may not ride as you can ride,
Or do what you can do ;
But sometimes you'd seem small beside
The New Chum Jackaroo.

His share of work he never shirks,
And through the blazing drought,
He lives the old things down, and works
His own salvation out.

When older, wiser chums despond
He battles brave of heart—
'Twas he who sailed of old beyond
The margin of the chart.

'Twas he who proved the world was round—
In crazy square canoes ;
The lands you're living in were found
By New Chum Jackaroos.

He crossed the deserts hot and bare,
From barren, hungry shores—
The plains that you would scarcely dare
With all your tanks and bores.

He fought a way through stubborn hills
Towards the setting sun—
Your fathers all and Burke and Wills
Were New Chums, every one.

When England fought with all the world
In those brave days gone by,
And all its strength against her hurled,
He held her honour high.

By Southern palms and Northern pines—
Where'er was life to lose—
She held her own with thin red lines
Of New Chum Jackaroos.

Through shot and shell and solitudes,

Wherever feet have gone,

The New Chums fought while eye-glass dudes

And Johnnies led them on.

And though he wear a foppish coat,

And these old things forget,

In stormy times I'd give a vote

For Cuffs and Collars yet.

THE DONS OF SPAIN

THE Eagle screams at the beck of trade, so Spain, as
the world goes round,
Must wrestle the right to live or die from the sons of
the land she found ;
For, as in the days when the buccaneer was abroad
on the Spanish Main,
The national honour is one thing dear to the hearts
of the Dons of Spain.

She has slaughtered thousands with fire and sword,
as the Christian world might know ;
We murder millions, but, thank the Lord ! we only
starve 'em slow.
The times have changed since the days of old, but
the same old facts remain—
We fight for Freedom, and God, and Gold, and the
Spaniards fight for Spain.

We fought with the strength of the moral right, and
they, as their ships went down,
They only fought with the grit to fight and their
armour to help 'em drown.
It mattered little what chance or hope, for ever their
path was plain,
The Church was the Church, and the Pope the Pope
—but the Spaniards fought for Spain.

If Providence struck for the honest thief at times in
the battle's din—
If ever it struck at the hypocrite—well, that's where
the Turks came in ;
But this remains ere we leave the wise to argue it
through in vain—
There's something great in the wrong that dies as the
Spaniards die for Spain.

The foes of Spain may be kin to us who are English
heart and soul,
And proud of our national righteousness and proud
of the lands we stole ;
But we yet might pause while those brave men die
and the death-drink pledge again —
For the sake of the past, if you're doomed, say I,
may your death be a grand one, Spain !

Then here's to the bravest of Freedom's foes who ever
with death have stood—

For the sake of the courage to die on steel as their
fathers died on wood ;

And here's a cheer for the flag unfurled in a hopeless
cause again,

For the sake of the days when the Christian world
was saved by the Dons of Spain.

THE BURSTING OF THE BOOM

THE shipping-office clerks are 'short,' the manager is gruff—

'They cannot make reductions,' and 'the fares are low enough.'

They ship us West with cattle, and we go like cattle too ;

And fight like dogs three times a day for what we get to chew. . . .

We'll have the pick of empty bunks and lots of stretching room,

And go for next to nothing at the Bursting of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—we'll all get a show :

Then when the Boom bursts is our time to go.

We'll meet 'em coming back in shoals, with looks of
deepest gloom,
But we're the sort that battle through at the
Bursting of the Boom.

The captain's easy-going when Fremantle comes in
sight ;
He can't say when you'll get ashore—'perhaps to-
morrow night ;'
Your coins are few , the charges high ; you must not
linger here—
You'll get your boxes from the hold 'when she's
'longside the pier.' . . .
The launch will foul the gangway, and the trembling
bulwarks loom
Above a fleet of harbour craft—at the Bursting of
the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—we'll all get a show ;
He'll 'take you for a bob, sir,' and where you want
to go.
He'll 'take the big portmanteau, sir, if he might so
presume'—
You needn't hump your luggage at the Bursting of
the Boom.

It's loafers—Customs-loafers—and you pay and pay again ;

They hinder you and cheat you from the gangway to the train ;

The pubs and restaurants are full—they haven't room for more ;

They charge us each three shillings for a shakedown on the floor ;

But, 'Show this gentleman upstairs—the first front parlour room.

'We'll see about your luggage, sir'—at the Bursting of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—we'll all get a show ;

And wait till the Boom bursts, and swear mighty low.

'We mostly charge a pound a week. How do you like the room ?'

And 'Show this gentleman the bath'—at the Bursting of the Boom.

I go down to the timber-yard (I cannot face the rent)

To get some strips of oregon to frame my hessian tent ;

To buy some scraps of lumber for a table or a shelf :

The boss comes up and says I might just look round for myself ;

The foreman grunts and turns away as silent as the tomb—

The boss himself will wait on me at the Bursting of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—we'll all get a load.

‘You had better take those scraps, sir, they’re only in the road.’

‘Now, where the hell’s the carter?’ you’ll hear the foreman fume ;

And, ‘Take that timber round at once!’ at the Bursting of the Boom.

Each one-a-penny grocer, in his box of board and tin,

Will think it condescending to consent to take you in ;

And not content with twice as much as what is just and right,

They charge and cheat you doubly, for the Boom is at its height.

It's 'Take it now or leave it now ;' 'your money or
your room ;'—

But 'Who's attending Mr. Brown ?' at the Bursting
of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—and take what you
can get,

'There's not the slightest hurry, and your bill ain't
ready yet.'

They'll call and get your orders until the crack o'
doom,

And send them round directly, at the Bursting of
the Boom.

.

No Country and no Brotherhood—such things are
dead and cold ;

A camp from all the lands or none, all mad for love
of gold ;

Where T'othersider number one makes slave of
number two,

And the vilest women of the world the vilest ways
pursue ;

And men go out and slave and bake and die in
agony

In western hells that God forgot, where never man
should be.

I feel a prophet in my heart that speaks the one
word 'Doom !'

And aye you'll hear the Devil laugh at the Bursting
of the Boom.

ANTONY VILLA

A Ballad of Ninety-three

OVER there, above the jetty, stands the mansion of
the Vardens,
With a tennis ground and terrace, and a flagstaff in
the gardens :
They are gentlemen and ladies—they've been 'toffs'
for generations,
But old Varden's been unlucky—lost a lot in specu-
lations.

Troubles gathered fast upon him when the mining
bubble 'busted,'
Then the bank suspended payment, where his little
all he trusted ;
And the butcher and the baker sent their bills in
when they read it,
Even John, the Chow that served him, has refused to
give him 'cledit.'

And the daughters of the Vardens—they are beautiful
as Graces—

But the balcony's deserted, and they rarely show
their faces ;

And the swells of their acquaintance never seem to
venture near them,

And the bailiff says they seldom have a cup of tea to
cheer them.

They were butterflies—I always was a common
caterpillar,

But I'm sorry for the ladies over there in 'Tony Villa,
Shut up there in 'Tony Villa with the bailiff and
their trouble ;

And the dried-up reservoir, where my tears were
seems to bubble.

Mrs. Rooney thinks it nothing when she sends a brat
to 'borry '

Just a pinch of tea and sugar till the grocer comes
'temorry ;'

But it's dif'rent with the Vardens—they would starve
to death as soon as

Knuckle down. You know, they weren't raised
exactly like the Rooneys !

.

There is gossip in the 'boxes' and the drawing-rooms
and gardens—

'Have you heard of Varden's failure? Have you
heard about the Vardens?'

And no doubt each toney mother on the Point across
the water's

Mighty glad about the downfall of the rivals of her
daughters.

(Tho' the poets and the writers say that man to man's
inhuman,

I'm inclined to think it's nothing to what woman is
to woman,

More especially, the ladies, save perhaps a fellow's
mother ;

And I think that men are better—they are kinder to
each other.)

There's a youngster by the jetty gathering cinders
from the ashes,

He was known as 'Master Varden' ere the great
financial crashes.

And his manner shows the dif'rence 'twixt the nurs'ry
and gutter —

But I've seen him at the grocer's buying half a pound
of butter.

And his mother fights her trouble in the house across
the water,

She is just as proud as Varden, though she was a
'cocky's' daughter ;

And at times I think I see her with the flick'ring
firelight o'er her,

Sitting pale and straight and quiet, gazing vacantly
before her.

There's a slight and girlish figure—Varden's youngest
daughter, Nettie—

On the terrace after sunset, when the boat is near
the jetty ;

She is good and pure and pretty, and her rivals don't
deny it,

Though they say that Nettie Varden takes in sewing
on the quiet.

(How her sister graced the 'circle,' all unconscious of
a lover

In the seedy 'god' who watched her from the gallery
above her !

Shade of Poverty was on him, and the light of Wealth
upon her,

But perhaps he loved her better than the swells
attending on her.)

.

There's a white man's heart in Varden, spite of all
the blue blood in him,

There are working men who wouldn't stand and hear
a word agin' him ;

But his name was never printed by the side of his
'donations,'

Save on hearts that have—in this world—very
humble circulations.

He was never stiff or hoggish—he was affable and
jolly,

And he'd always say 'Good morning' to the deck
hand on the 'Polly ;'

He would 'barrack' with the newsboys on the Quay
across the ferry,

And he'd very often tip 'em coming home a trifle
merry.

But his chin is getting higher, and his features daily
harden

(He will not 'give up possession'—there's a lot of
fight in Varden) ;

And the way he steps the gangway ! oh, you couldn't
but admire it !

Just as proud as ever hero walked the plank aboard
a pirate !

He will think about the hardships that his girls were
never 'useter,'
And it must be mighty heavy on the thoroughbred
old rooster ;
But he'll never strike his colours, and I tell a
lying tale if
Varden's pride don't kill him sooner than the bankers
or the bailiff.

You remember when we often had to go without our
dinners,
In the days when Pride and Hunger fought a finish
out within us ;
And how Pride would come up groggy—Hunger
whooping low' and louder—
And the swells are proud as we are ; they are just
as proud—and prouder.

Yes, the toffs have grit, in spite of all our sneering
and our scorning—

What's the crowd ? What's that ? God help us !—

Varden shot himself this morning ! . . .

There'll be gossip in the 'circle,' in the drawing-
rooms and gardens ;

But I'm sorry for the family ; yes—I'm sorry for the
Vardens.

SECOND CLASS WAIT HERE

ON suburban railway stations—you may see them as
you pass—

There are signboards on the platforms saying, 'Wait
here second class ;'

And to me the whirr and thunder and the cluck of
running gear

Seem to be for ever saying, saying 'Second class wait
here'—

 'Wait here second class,

 'Second class wait here.'

Seem to be for ever saying, saying 'Second class
wait here.'

And the second class were waiting in the days of
serf and prince,

And the second class are waiting—they've been
waiting ever since.

There are gardens in the background, and the line is
bare and drear,

Yet they wait beneath a signboard, sneering 'Second
class wait here.'

I have waited oft in winter, in the mornings dark
and damp,

When the asphalt platform glistened underneath the
lonely lamp.

Ghostly on the brick-faced cutting 'Sellum's Soap'
and 'Blower's Beer ;'

Ghostly on enamelled signboards with their 'Second
class wait here.

And the others seemed like burglars, slouched and
muffled to the throats,

Standing round apart and silent in their shoddy
overcoats,

And the wind among the wires, and the poplars
bleak and bare,

Seemed to be for ever snarling, snarling 'Second class
wait there.'

Out beyond the further suburb, 'neath a chimney
stack alone,

Lay the works of Grinder Brothers, with a platform
of their own ;

And I waited there and suffered, waited there for
many a year,
Slaved beneath a phantom signboard, telling our class
to wait here.

Ah ! a man must feel revengeful for a boyhood such
as mine.

God ! I hate the very houses near the workshop by
the line ;

And the smell of railway stations, and the roar of
running gear,

And the scornful-seeming signboards, saying 'Second
class wait here.'

There's a train with Death for driver, which is ever
going past,

And there are no class compartments, and we all
must go at last

To the long white jasper platform with an Eden in
the rear ;

And there won't be any signboards, saying 'Second
class wait here.

THE SHIPS THAT WON'T GO DOWN

WE hear a great commotion
'Bout the ship that comes to grief,
That founders in mid-ocean,
Or is driven on a reef ;
Because it's cheap and brittle
A score of sinners drown.
But we hear but mighty little
Of the ships that won't go down.

Here's honour to the builders—
The builders of the past ;
Here's honour to the builders
That builded ships to last ;
Here's honour to the captain,
And honour to the crew ;
Here's double-column head-lines
To the ships that battle through.

They make a great sensation
About famous men that fail,
That sink a world of chances
In the city morgue or gaol,
Who drink, or blow their brains out,
Because of ' Fortune's frown.'
But we hear far too little
Of the men who won't go down.

The world is full of trouble,
And the world is full of wrong,
But the heart of man is noble,
And the heart of man is strong !
They say the sea sings dirges,
But I would say to you
That the wild wave's song's a pæan
For the men that battle through.

THE MEN WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN

WHEN God's wrath-cloud is o'er me,
Affrighting heart and mind ;
When days seem dark before me,
And days seem black behind ;
Those friends who think they know me—
Who deem their insight keen—
They ne'er forget to show me
The man I might have been.

He's rich and independent,
Or rising fast to fame ;
His bright star is ascendant,
The country knows his name ;
His houses and his gardens
Are splendid to be seen ;
His fault the wise world pardons—
The man I might have been.

His fame and fortune haunt me ;
His virtues wave me back ;
His name and prestige daunt me
When I would take the track ;
But you, my friend true-hearted—
God keep our friendship green !—
You know how I was parted
From all I might have been.

But what avails the ache of
Remorse or weak regret ?
We'll battle for the sake of
The men we might be yet !
We'll strive to keep in sight of
The brave, the true, and clean,
And triumph yet in spite of
The men we might have been.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

WHEN fairer faces turn from me,
And gayer friends grow cold,
And I have lost through poverty
The friendship bought with gold ;
When I have served the selfish turn
Of some all-worldly few,
And Folly's lamps have ceased to burn,
Then I'll come back to you.

When my admirers find I'm not
The rising star they thought,
And praise or blame is all forgot
My early promise brought ;
When brighter rivals lead a host
Where once I led a few,
And kinder times reward their boast,
Then I'll come back to you.

You loved me, not for what I had
Or what I might have been.
You saw the good, but not the bad,
Was kind, for that between.
I know that you'll forgive again—
That you will judge me true ;
I'll be too tired to explain
When I come back to you.

THE BATTLING DAYS

So, sit you down in a straight-backed chair, with your
pipe and your wife content,
And cross your knees with your wisest air, and preach
of the 'days mis-spent;'
Grown fat and moral apace, old man ! you prate of
the change 'since then'—
In spite of all, I'd as lief be back in those hard old
days again.

They were hard old days ; they were battling days ;
they were cruel at itmes—but then,
In spite of all, I would rather be back in those hard
old days again.
The land was barren to sow wild oats in the days
when we sowed our own—
('Twas little we thought or our friends believed that
ours would ever be sown)

But the wild oats wave on their stormy path, and
they speak of the hearts of men—
I would sow a crop if I had my time in those hard old
days again.

We travel first, or we go saloon—on the planned-out
trips we go,
With those who are neither rich nor poor, and we
find that the life is slow ;
It's 'a pleasant trip' where they cried, 'Good luck!
There was fun in the steerage then—
In spite of all, I would fain be back in those vaga-
bond days again.

On Saturday night we've a pound to spare—a pound
for a trip down town—
We took more joy in those hard old days for a hardly
spared half-crown ;
We took more pride in the pants we patched than
the suits we have had since then—
In spite of all, I would rather be back in those
comical days again.

'Twas We and the World—and the rest go hang—as
the Outside tracks we trod ;
Each thought of himself as a man and mate, and not
as a martyred god ;

The world goes wrong when your heart is strong—and
this is the way with men—

The world goes right when your liver is white, and
you preach of the change 'since then.'

They were hard old days ; they were battling days ;
they were cruel times—but then,

In spite of all, we shall live to-night in those hard
old days again.

WRITTEN AFTERWARDS

So the days of my tramping are over,
And the days of my riding are done—
I'm about as content as a rover
Will ever be under the sun ;
I write, after reading your letter—
My pipe with old memories rife—
And I feel in a mood that had better
Not meet the true eyes of the wife.

You must never admit a suggestion
That old things are good to recall ;
You must never consider the question :
' Was I happier then, after all ?'
You must banish the old hope and sorrow
That make the sad pleasures of life,
You must live for To-day and To-morrow
If you want to be just to the wife.

I have changed since the first day I kissed her.

Which is due—Heaven bless her !—to her ;
I'm respected and trusted—I'm 'Mister,'

Addressed by the children as 'Sir.'

And I feel the respect without feigning—

But you'd laugh the great laugh of your life
If you only saw me entertaining
An old lady friend of the wife.

By-the-way, when you're writing, remember

That you never went drinking with me,
And forget our last night of December,

Lest our sev'ral accounts disagree.
And, for my sake, old man, you had better
Avoid the old language of strife,
For the technical terms of your letter
May be misunderstood by the wife.

Never hint of the girls appertaining

To the past (when you're writing again),
For they take such a lot of explaining,
And you know how I hate to explain.

There are some things, we know to our sorrow,
That cut to the heart like a knife,
And your past is To-day and To-morrow
If you want to be true to the wife.

I believe that the creed we were chums in
Was grand, but too abstract and bold,
And the knowledge of life only comes in
When you're married and fathered and old.
And it's well. You may travel as few men,
You may stick to a mistress for life ;
But the world, as it is, born of woman
Must be seen through the eyes of the wife.

No doubt you are dreaming as *I* did
And going the careless old pace,
While my future grows dull and decided,
And the world narrows down to the Place.
Let it be. If my 'treason's' resented,
You may do worse, old man, in your life ;
Let me dream, too, that I am contented—
For the sake of a true little wife.

THE UNCULTURED RHYMER TO HIS CULTURED CRITICS

FIGHT through ignorance, want, and care—

Through the griefs that crush the spirit ;
Push your way to a fortune fair,

And the smiles of the world you'll merit.

Long, as a boy, for the chance to learn—

For the chance that Fate denies you ;
Win degrees where the Life-lights burn,
And scores will teach and advise you.

My cultured friends ! you have come too late

With your bypath nicely graded ;
I've fought thus far on my track of Fate,
And I'll follow the rest unaided.

Must I be stopped by a college gate

On the track of Life encroaching ?
Be dumb to Love, and be dumb to Hate,
For the lack of a college coaching ?

You grope for Truth in a language dead—

In the dust 'neath tower and steeple!

What know you of the tracks we tread?

And what know you of our people?

'I must read this, and that, and the rest,'

And write as the cult expects me?—

I'll read the book that may please me best,

And write as my heart directs me!

You were quick to pick on a faulty line

That I strove to put my soul in:

Your eyes were keen for a 'dash' of mine

In the place of a semi-colon—

And blind to the rest. And is it for such

As you I must brook restriction?

'I was taught too little?' I learnt too much

To care for a pedant's diction!

Must I turn aside from my destined way

For a task your Joss would find me?

I come with strength of the living day,

And with half the world behind me;

I leave you alone in your cultured halls

To drivel and croak and cavil:

Till your voice goes further than college walls,

Keep out of the tracks we travel!

THE WRITER'S DREAM

A WRITER wrote of the hearts of men, and he
followed their tracks afar ;

For his was a spirit that forced his pen to write of
the things that are.

His heart grew tired of the truths he told, for his
life was hard and grim ;

His land seemed barren, its people cold — yet the
world was dear to him ;—

So he sailed away from the Streets of Strife, he
travelled by land and sea,

In search of a people who lived a life as life in the
world should be.

And he reached a spot where the scene was fair, with
forest and field and wood,

And all things came with the seasons there, and each
of its kind was good ;

There were mountain-rivers and peaks of snow, there
were lights of green and gold,
And echoing caves in the cliffs below, where a world-
wide ocean rolled.

The lives of men from the wear of Change and the
strife of the world were free—
For Steam was barred by the mountain-range and the
rocks of the Open Sea.

And the last that were born of a noble race—when
the page of the South was fair—

The last of the conquered dwelt in peace with the last
of the victors there.

He saw their hearts with the author's eyes who had
written their ancient lore,

And he saw their lives as he'd dreamed of such—ah !
many a year before.

And 'I'll write a book of these simple folk ere I to
the world return,

'And the cold who read shall be kind for these—and
the wise who read shall learn.

'Never again in a song of mine shall a jarring note
be heard :

'Never again shall a page or line be marred by a
bitter word ;

‘But love and laughter and kindly hours will the
book I’ll write recall,
‘With chastening tears for the loss of one, and sighs
for their sorrows all.
‘Old eyes will light with a kindly smile, and the
young eyes dance with glee—
‘And the heart of the cynic will rest awhile for my
simple folk and me.’

The lines ran on as he dipped his pen—ran true to his
heart and ear—

Like the brighter pages of memory when every line
is clear.

The pictures came and the pictures passed, like days
of love and light—

He saw his chapters from first to last, and he thought
it grand to write.

And the writer kissed his girlish wife, and he kissed
her twice for pride :

‘’Tis a book of love, though a book of life ! and a
book *you’ll* read !’ he cried.

He was blind at first to each senseless slight (for
shabby and poor he came)

From local ‘Fashion’ and mortgaged pride that
scarce could sign its name.

What dreamer would dream of such paltry pride in a
scene so fresh and fair?

But the local spirit intensified—with its pitiful shams
—was there;

There were cliques wherever two houses stood (no
rest for a family ghost!)

They hated each other as women could—but they
hated the stranger most.

The writer wrote by day and night and he cried in
the face of Fate—

I'll cleave to my dream of life in spite of the cynical
ghosts that wait.

'Tis the shyness born of their simple lives,' he said
to the paltry pride—

(The homely tongues of the simple wives ne'er erred
on the generous side)—

'They'll prove me true and they'll prove me kind ere
the year of grace be passed,'

But the ignorant whisper of 'axe to grind!' went
home to his heart at last.

The writer sat by his drift-wood fire three nights of
the South-east gale,

His pen lay idle on pages vain, for his book was a
fairy tale.

The world-wise lines of an elder age were plain on
his aching brow,

As he sadly thought of each brighter page that would
never be written now.

‘I’ll write no more!’ But he bowed his head, for
his heart was in Dreamland yet—

‘The pages written I’ll burn,’ he said, ‘and the pages
thought forget.’

But he heard the hymn of the Open Sea, and the
old fierce anger burned,

And he wrenched his heart from its dreamland free
as the fire of his youth returned :—

‘The weak man’s madness, the strong man’s scorn—
the rebellious hate of youth

‘From a deeper love of the world are born! And
the cynical ghost is Truth!’

And the writer rose with a strength anew wherein
Doubt could have no part ;

‘I’ll write my book and it *shall* be true—the truth of
a writer’s heart.

‘Ay! cover the wrong with a fairy tale—who never
knew want or care—

‘A bright green scum on a stagnant pool that will
reek the longer there.

‘For the men who toil in the dust and heat of the barren lands are best !

- ‘The stranger’s hand to the stranger, yet—for a
roving folk are mine—
- ‘The stranger’s store for the stranger set—and the
camp-fire glow the sign!
- ‘The generous hearts of the world, we find, thrive best
on the barren sod,
- ‘And the selfish thrive where Nature’s kind (they’d
bully or crawl to God!)
- ‘I was born to write of the things that are! and the
strength was given to me;
- ‘I was born to strike at the things that mar the world
as the world should be!
- ‘By the dumb heart-hunger and dreams of youth, by
the hungry tracks I’ve trod—
- ‘I’ll fight as a man for the sake of truth, nor pose as
a martyred god.
- ‘By the heart of “Bill” and the heart of “Jim,” and
the men that *their* hearts deem “white,”
- ‘By the handgrips fierce, and the hard eyes dim with
forbidden tears!—I’ll write!
- ‘I’ll write untroubled by cultured fools, or the dense
that fume and fret—
- ‘For against the wisdom of all their schools I would
stake mine instinct yet!

- ‘ For the cynical strain in the writer’s song is the
 world, not *he*, to blame,
‘ And I’ll write as I think, in the knowledge strong
 that thousands think the same ;
‘ And the men who fight in the Dry Country grim
 battles by day, by night,
‘ Will believe in me, and will stand by me, and will
 say to the world, “ He’s right ! ” ’

THE JOLLY DEAD MARCH

If I ever be worthy or famous—
Which I'm sadly beginning to doubt—
When the angel whose place 'tis to name us
Shall say to my spirit, 'Pass out!'
I wish for no sniv'ling about me
(My work was the work of the land),
But I hope that my country will shout me
The price of a decent brass band.

Thump! thump! of the drum and 'Ta-ra-rit,'
Thump! thump! and the music—it's grand,
If only in dreams, or in spirit,
To ride or march after the band!
And myself and my mourners go straying,
And strolling and drifting along
With a band in the front of us playing
The tune of an old battle song!

I ask for no 'turn-out' to bear me ;
I ask not for railings or slabs,
And spare me ! my country—oh, spare me !
The hearse and the long string of cabs !
I ask not the baton or 'starts' of
The bore with the musical ear,
But the music that's blown from the hearts of
The men who work hard and drink beer.

And let 'em strike up 'Annie Laurie,'
And let them burst out with 'Lang Syne'—
Twin voices of sadness and glory,
That have ever been likings of mine.
And give the French war-hymn deep-throated
The Watch of the Germans between,
And let the last mile be devoted
To 'Britannia' and 'Wearing the Green.'

And if, in the end—more's the pity—
There is fame more than money to spare—
There's a van-man I know in the city
Who'll convey me, right side up with care.
True sons of Australia, and noble,
Have gone from the long dusty way,

While the sole mourner fought down his trouble
With his pipe on the shaft of the dray.
But let them strike up 'Annie Laurie,' &c.

And my spirit will join the procession—
Will pause, if it may, on the brink—
Nor feel the least shade of depression
When the mourners drop out for a drink ;
It may be a hot day in December,
Or a cold day in June it may be,
And the drink will but help them remember
The good points the world missed in me.
And help 'em to love 'Annie Laurie,'
And help 'em to raise 'Auld Lang Syne,' &c.

'Unhook the West Port' for an orphan,
An old digger chorus revive—
If you don't hear a whoop from the coffin,
I am *not* being buried alive.
But I'll go with a spirit less bitter
Than mine own on the earth may have been,
And, perhaps, to save trouble, Saint Peter
Will pass me, two comrades between.

And let them strike up 'Annie Laurie,'
And let 'em burst out with 'Lang Syne,'
Twin voices of sadness and glory
That have ever been likings of mine.
Let them swell the French war-hymn deep-throated
(And I'll not buck at 'God Save the Queen'),
But let the last mile be devoted
To 'Britannia' and 'Wearing the Green.'

Thump! thump! of the drums we inherit—
War-drums of my dreams! Oh it's grand,
If only in fancy or spirit,
To ride or march after a band!
And we, the World-Battlers, go straying
And loving and laughing along—
With Hope in the lead of us playing
The tune of a life-battle song!

MY LITERARY FRIEND

ONCE I wrote a little poem which I thought was very
fine,
And I showed the printer's copy to a critic friend of
mine,
First he praised the thing a little, then he found a
little fault ;
'The ideas are good,' he muttered, 'but the rhythm
seems to halt.'

So I straighten'd up the rhythm where he marked it
with his pen,
And I copied it and showed it to my clever friend
again.
'You've improved the metre greatly, but the rhymes
are bad,' he said,
As he read it slowly, scratching surplus wisdom from
his head.

So I worked as he suggested (I believe in taking
time),
And I burnt the 'midnight taper' while I
straightened up the rhyme.
'It is better now,' he muttered, 'you go on and
you'll succeed,
'It has got a ring about it—the ideas are what you
need.'

So I worked for hours upon it (I go on when I
commence),
And I kept in view the rhythm and the jingle and
the sense,
And I copied it and took it to my solemn friend once
more—
It reminded him of something he had somewhere
read before.

.
Now the people say I'd never put such horrors into
print
If I wasn't too conceited to accept a friendly hint,
And my dearest friends are certain that I'd profit in
the end
If I'd always show my copy to a literary friend.

MARY CALLED HIM 'MISTER'

THEY'D parted but a year before—she never thought
he'd come,

She stammer'd, blushed, held out her hand, and called
him '*Mister Gum.*'

How could he know that all the while she longed to
murmur '*John.*'

He called her '*Miss le Brook,*' and asked how she was
getting on.

They'd parted but a year before ; they'd loved each
other well,

But he'd been to the city, and he came back *such* a
swell.

They longed to meet in fond embrace, they hungered
for a kiss—

But Mary called him '*Mister,*' and the idiot called
her '*Miss.*'

He stood and lean'd against the door—a stupid chap
was he—

And, when she asked if he'd come in and have a cup
of tea,

He looked to left, he looked to right, and then he
glanced behind,

And slowly doffed his cabbage-tree, and said he
'didn't mind.'

She made a shy apology because the meat was
tough,

And then she asked if he was sure his tea was sweet
enough ;

He stirred the tea and sipped it twice, and answer'd
'plenty, quite ;'

And cut the smallest piece of beef and said that it
was 'right.'

She glanced at him at times and cough'd an awkward
little cough ;

He stared at anything but her and said, 'I must
be off.'

That evening he went riding north—a sad and lonely
ride—

She locked herself inside her room, and there sat
down and cried.

They'd parted but a year before, they loved each other well—

But she was such a country girl and he was such a swell ;

They longed to meet in fond embrace, they hungered for a kiss—

But Mary called him 'Mister' and the idiot called her 'Miss.'

REJECTED

SHE says she's very sorry, as she sees you to the gate ;
You calmly say ' Good-bye ' to her while standing
off a yard,
Then you lift your hat and leave her, walking mighty
stiff and straight—
But you're hit, old man—hit hard.

In your brain the words are burning of the answer
that she gave,
As you turn the nearest corner and you stagger
just a bit ;
But you pull yourself together, for a man's strong
heart is brave
When it's hit, old man—hard hit.

You might try to drown the sorrow, but the drink
has no effect ;

You cannot stand the barmaid with her coarse and
vulgar wit ;

And so you seek the street again, and start for home
direct,

When you're hit, old man—hard hit.

You see the face of her you lost, the pity in her
smile—

Ah ! she is to the barmaid as is snow to chimney
grit ;

You're a better man and nobler in your sorrow, for a
while,

When you're hit, old man—hard hit.

And, arriving at your lodgings, with a face of deepest
gloom,

You shun the other boarders and your manly brow
you knit ;

You take a light and go upstairs directly to your
room—

But the whole house knows you're hit.

You clutch the scarf and collar, and you tear them
from your throat,

You rip your waistcoat open like a fellow in a fit ;
And you fling them in a corner with the made-to-
order coat,

When you're hit, old man—hard hit.

You throw yourself, despairing, on your narrow little
bed,

Or pace the room till someone starts with 'Skit !
cat !—skit !'

And then lie blindly staring at the plaster overhead—
You are hit, old man—hard hit.

It's doubtful whether vanity or love has suffered
worst,

So neatly in our nature are those feelings interknit,
Your heart keeps swelling up so bad, you wish that
it would burst,

When you're hit, old man—hard hit.

You think and think, and think, and think, till you
go mad almost ;

Across your sight the spectres of the bygone seem
to flit ;

The very girl herself seems dead, and comes back as
a ghost,

When you're hit, like this—hard hit.

You know that it's all over—you're an older man by
years,

In the future not a twinkle, in your black sky not
a split.

Ah! you'll think it well that women have the privilege
of tears,

When you're hit, old man—hard hit.

You long and hope for nothing but the rest that
sleep can bring,

And you find that in the morning things have
brightened up a bit ;

But you're dull for many evenings, with a cracked
heart in a sling,

When you're hit, old man—hard hit.

O'HARA, J.P.

JAMES PATRICK O'HARA, the Justice of Peace,
He bossed the P.M. and he bossed the police ;
A parent, a deacon, a landlord was he—
A townsman of weight was O'Hara, J.P.

He gave out the prizes, foundation-stones laid,
He shone when the Governor's visit was paid ;
And twice re-elected as Mayor was he—
The flies couldn't roost on O'Hara, J.P.

Now Sandy M'Fly, of the Axe-and-the-Saw,
Was charged with a breach of the licensing law—
He sold after hours whilst talking too free
On matters concerning O'Hara, J.P.

And each contradicted the next witness flat,
 Concerning back parlours, side-doors, and all that ;
 'Twas very conflicting, as all must agree—
 'Ye'd betther take care !' said O'Hara, J.P.

But 'Baby,' the barmaid, her evidence gave—
 A poor, timid darling who tried to be brave—
 'Now, *don't* be afraid—if it's frightened ye be—
 'Speak out, my good girl,' said O'Hara, J.P.

Her hair was so golden, her eyes were so blue,
 Her face was so fair and her words seemed so true—
 So green in the ways of sweet women was he
 That she jolted the heart of O'Hara, J P.

He turned to the other grave Justice of Peace,
 And whispered, 'You can't always trust the police ;
 'I'll visit the premises during the day,
 'And see for myself,' said O'Hara, Jay Pay.
(Case postponed.)

.

'Twas early next morning, or late the same night—
 'Twas early next morning' we think would be right—
 And sounds that betokened a breach of the law
 Escaped through the cracks of the Axe-and-the-Saw.

And Constable Dogherty, out in the street,
Met Constable Clancy a bit off his beat ;
He took him with finger and thumb by the ear,
And led him around to a lane in the rear.

He pointed a blind where strange shadows were seen—
Wild pantomime hinting of revels within—
' We'll drop on M'Fly, if you'll listen to me,
' And prove we are right to O'Hara, J.P.'

But Clancy was up to the lay of the land,
He cautiously shaded his mouth with his hand—
' Wisht, man ! Howld yer whisht ! or it's ruined
we'll be,
' It's the justice himself—it's O'Hara, J.P.'

They hish'd and they whishted, and turned themselves
round,
And got themselves off like two cats on wet ground ;
Agreeing to be, on their honour as men,
A deaf-dumb-and-blind institution just then.

Inside on a sofa, two barmaids between,
With one on his knee was a gentleman seen ;
And any chance eye at the keyhole could see
In less than a wink 'twas O'Hara, J.P.

The first in the chorus of songs that were sung,
The loudest that laughed at the jokes that were
sprung,
The guest of the evening, the soul of the spree—
The daddy of all was O'Hara, J.P.

And hard-cases chuckled, and hard-cases said
That Baby and Alice conveyed him to bed—
In subsequent storms it was painful to see
Those hard-cases side with the sinful J.P.

Next day, in the court, when the case came in sight,
O'Hara declared he was satisfied quite ;
The case was dismissed—it was destined to be
The final ukase of O'Hara, J.P.

The law and religion came down on him first—
The Christian was hard but his wife was the worst !
Half ruined and half driven crazy was he—
It made an old man of O'Hara, J.P.

Now, young men who come from the bush, do you
hear ?

Who know not the power of barmaids and beer—
Don't see for yourself ! from temptation steer free,
Remember the fall of O'Hara, J.P.

BILL AND JIM FALL OUT

BILL and Jim are mates no longer—they would scorn
the name of mate—

Those two bushmen hate each other with a soul-con-
suming hate ;

Yet erstwhile they were as brothers should be (tho'
they never will) :

Ne'er were mates to one another half so true as Jim
and Bill.

Bill was one of those who have to argue every day or
die—

Though, of course, he swore 'twas Jim who always
itched to argufy.

They would, on most abstract subjects, contradict
each other flat

And at times in lurid language—they were mates in
spite of that.

Bill believed the Bible story *re* the origin of him—
He was sober, he was steady, he was orthodox ; while
Jim,

Who, we grieve to state, was always getting into
drunken scrapes,
Held that man degenerated from degenerated apes.

Bill was British to the backbone, he was loyal
through and through ;

Jim declared that Blucher's Prussians won the fight
at Waterloo,

And he hoped the coloured races would in time wipe
out the white—

And it rather strained their mateship, but it didn't
burst it quite.

They battled round in Maoriland—they saw it
through and through—

And argued on the rata, what it was and how it
grew ;

Bill believed the vine grew downward, Jim declared
that it grew up—

Yet they always shared their fortunes to the final
bite and sup.

Night after night they argued how the kangaroo was
born,

And each one held the other's stupid theories in
scorn,

Bill believed it was 'born inside,' Jim declared it was
born out—

Each as to his own opinions never had the slightest
doubt.

They left the earth to argue and they went among the
stars,

Re conditions atmospheric, Bill believed 'the hair of
Mars

'Was too thin for human bein's to exist in mortal
states.'

Jim declared it was too thick, if anything—yet they
were mates

Bill for Freetrade—Jim, Protection—argued as to
which was best

For the welfare of the workers—and their mateship
stood the test !

They argued over what they meant and didn't mean
at all,

And what they said and didn't—and were mates in
spite of all.

Till one night *the two together* tried to light a fire in
camp,

When they had a leaky billy and the wood was scarce
and damp.

And . . . No matter : let the moral be distinctly
understood :

One alone should tend the fire, while the other brings
the wood.

THE PAROO

It was a week from Christmas-time,
As near as I remember,
And half a year since in the rear
We'd left the Darling Timber.
The track was hot and more than drear ;
The long day seemed forever ;
But now we knew that we were near
Our camp—the Paroo River.

With blighted eyes and blistered feet,
With stomachs out of order,
Half mad with flies and dust and heat
We'd crossed the Queensland Border.
I longed to hear a stream go by
And see the circles quiver ;
I longed to lay me down and die
That night on Paroo River.

'Tis said the land out West is grand—

I do not care who says it—

It isn't even decent scrub,

Nor yet an honest desert ;

It's plagued with flies, and broiling hot,

A curse is on it ever ;

I really think that God forgot

The country round that river.

My mate—a native of the land—

In fiery speech and vulgar,

Condemned the flies and cursed the sand,

And doubly damned the mulga.

He peered ahead, he peered about—

A bushman he, and clever—

'Now mind you keep a sharp look-out ;

'We must be near the river.'

The 'nose-bags' heavy on each chest

(God bless one kindly squatter !)

With grateful weight our hearts they pressed—

We only wanted water.

The sun was setting (in the west)

In colour like a liver—

We'd fondly hoped to camp and rest

That night on Paroo River.

A cloud was on my mate's broad brow,
And once I heard him mutter :
' I'd like to see the Darling now,
' God bless the Grand Old Gutter !'
And now and then he stopped and said
In tones that made me shiver —
' It cannot well be on ahead,
' *I think we've crossed the river.*'

But soon we saw a strip of ground
That crossed the track we followed—
No barer than the surface round,
But just a little hollowed.
His brows assumed a thoughtful frown—
This speech he did deliver :
' I wonder if we'd best go down
' Or up the blessed river ?'
' But where,' said I, ' 's the blooming stream ?'
And he replied, ' We're at it !'
I stood awhile, as in a dream,
' Great Scott !' I cried, ' is *that* it ?'
' Why, that is some old bridle-track !'
He chuckled, ' Well, I never !'
' It's nearly time you came out-back—
' *This is the Paroo River !*'

No place to camp—no spot of damp—

No moisture to be seen there ;

If e'er there was, it left no sign

That it had ever been there.

But ere the morn, with heart and soul

We'd cause to thank the Giver—

We found a muddy water-hole

Some ten miles down the river.

THE GREEN-HAND ROUSEABOUT

CALL this hot? I beg your pardon. Hot!—you don't know what it means.

(What's that, waiter? lamb or mutton! Thank you—mine is beef and greens.

Bread and butter while I'm waiting. Milk? Oh, yes—a bucketful.)

I'm just in from west the Darling, 'picking-up' and 'rolling wool.'

Mutton stewed or chops for breakfast, dry and tasteless, boiled in fat ;

Bread or brownie, tea or coffee—two hours' graft in front of that ;

Legs of mutton boiled for dinner—mutton greasy—warm for tea—

Mutton curried (gave my order, beef and plenty greens for me.)

Breakfast, curried rice and mutton till your innards
sacrifice,

And you sicken at the colour and the smell of curried
rice.

All day long with living mutton—bits and belly-wool
and fleece ;

Blinded by the yoke of wool, and shirt and trousers
stiff with grease,

Till you long for sight of verdure, cabbage-plots and
water clear,

And you crave for beef and butter as a boozier craves
for beer.

.

Dusty patch in baking mulga—glaring iron hut and
shed—

Feel and smell of rain forgotten—water scarce and
feed-grass dead.

Hot and suffocating sunrise—all-pervading sheep-yard
smell—

Stiff and aching green-hand stretches—‘Slushy’ rings
the bullock-bell—

Pint of tea and hunk of brownie—sinners string
towards the shed—

Great, black, greasy crows round carcass—screen
behind of dust-cloud red.

Engine whistles. 'Go it, tigers!' and the agony
begins,

Picking up for seven devils out of Hades—for my
sins ;

Picking up for seven devils, seven demons out of
Hell !

Sell their souls to get the bell-sheep—half a-dozen
Christs they'd sell !

Day grows hot as where they come from—too damned
hot for men or brutes ;

Roof of corrugated iron, six-foot-six above the shoots !

Whiz and rattle and vibration, like an endless chain
of trams ;

Blasphemy of five-and-forty — prickly heat — and
stink of rams !

'Barcoo' leaves his pen-door open and the sheep
come bucking out ;

When the rouser goes to pen them, 'Barcoo' blasts
the rouseabout.

Injury with insult added—trial of our cursing
powers—

Cursed and cursing back enough to damn a dozen
worlds like ours.

‘Take my combs down to the grinder, will yer?’

‘Seen my cattle-pup?’

‘There’s a sheep fell down in my shoot—just jump down and pick it up.’

‘Give the office when the boss comes.’ ‘Catch that gory sheep, old man.’

‘Count the sheep in my pen, will yer?’ ‘Fetch my combs back when yer can.’

‘When yer get a chance, old feller, will yer pop down to the hut?’

‘Fetch my pipe—the cook ’ll show yer—and I’ll let yer have a cut.’

Shearer yells for tar and needle. Ringer’s roaring like a bull :

‘Wool away, you (son of angels). Where the hell’s the (foundling) WOOL!!’

.

Pound a week and station prices—mustn’t kick against the pricks—

Seven weeks of lurid mateship—ruined soul and four pounds six.

.

What's that ? waiter ? *me ?* stuffed mutton ! Look
here, waiter, to be brief,
I said beef ! you blood-stained villain ! Beef—moo-
cow — Roast Bullock — BEEF !

THE MAN FROM WATERLOO

(With kind regards to " Banjo.")

It was the Man from Waterloo,
When work in town was slack,
Who took the track as bushmen do,
And humped his swag out back.
He tramped for months without a bob,
For most the sheds were full,
Until at last he got a job
At picking up the wool.
He found the work was rather rough,
But swore to see it through,
For he was made of sterling stuff—
The Man from Waterloo.

The first remark was like a stab
That fell his ear upon,
'Twas—' There's another something scab
' The boss has taken on ! '

They couldn't let the towny be—
They sneered like anything ;
They'd mock him when he'd sound the ' g '
In words that end in ' ing.'

There came a man from Ironbark,
And at the shed he shore ;
He scoffed his victuals like a shark,
And like a fiend he swore.
He'd shorn his flowing beard that day—
He found it hard to reap—
Because 'twas hot and in the way
While he was shearing sheep.
His loaded fork in grimy holt
Was poised, his jaws moved fast,
Impatient till his throat could bolt
The mouthful taken last.
He couldn't stand a something toff,
Much less a jackaroo ;
And swore to take the trimmings off
The Man from Waterloo.

The towny saw he must be up
Or else be underneath,
And so one day, before them all,
He dared to clean his teeth.

The men came running from the shed,
And shouted, ' Here's a lark !'
' It's gone to clean its tooties !' said
The man from Ironbark.
His feeble joke was much enjoyed ;
He sneered as bullies do,
And with a scrubbing-brush he guyed
The Man from Waterloo.

The Jackaroo made no remark
But peeled and waded in,
And soon the Man from Ironbark
Had three teeth less to grin !
And when they knew that he could fight
They swore to see him through,
Because they saw that he was right—
The Man from Waterloo.

Now in a shop in Sydney, near
The Bottle on the Shelf,
The tale is told—with trimmings—by
The Jackaroo himself.
' They made my life a hell,' he said ;
' They wouldn't let me be ;
' They set the bully of the shed
' To take it out of me.

- ‘ The dirt was on him like a sheath,
‘ He seldom washed his phiz ;
‘ He sneered because I cleaned my teeth—
‘ I guess I dusted his !
‘ I treated them as they deserved—
‘ I signed on one or two !
‘ They won’t forget me soon,’ observed
The Man from Waterloo.

SAINT PETER

Now, I think there is a likeness
 'Twixt St. Peter's life and mine,
For he did a lot of trampin'
 Long ago in Palestine.
He was 'union' when the workers
 First began to organise,
And—I'm glad that old St. Peter
 Keeps the gate of Paradise.

When the ancient agitator
 And his brothers carried swags,
I've no doubt he very often
 Tramped with empty tucker-bags ;
And I'm glad he's Heaven's picket,
 For I hate explainin' things,
And he'll think a union ticket
 Just as good as Whitely King's.

He denied the Saviour's union,
Which was weak of him, no doubt ;
But perhaps his feet was blistered
And his boots had given out.
And the bitter storm was rushin'
On the bark and on the slabs,
And a cheerful fire was blazin',
And the hut was full of 'scabs.'
When I reach the great head-station—
Which is somewhere 'off the track'—
I won't want to talk with angels
Who have never been out back ;
They might bother me with offers
Of a banjo—meanin' well—
And a pair of wings to fly with,
When I only want a spell.
I'll just ask for old St. Peter,
And I think, when he appears,
I will only have to tell him
That I carried swag for years.
'I've been on the track,' I'll tell him,
'An' I done the best I could,'
And he'll understand me better
Than the other angels would.

He won't try to get a chorus
Out of lungs that's worn to rags,
Or to graft the wings on shoulders
That is stiff with humpin' swags.
But I'll rest about the station
Where the work-bell never rings,
Till they blow the final trumpet
And the Great Judge sees to things.

THE STRANGER'S FRIEND

THE strangest things, and the maddest things, that a
man can do or say,

To the chaps and fellers and coves Out Back are
matters of every day ;

Maybe on account of the lives they lead, or the life
that their hearts discard—

But never a fool can be too mad or a 'hard case'
be too hard.

I met him in Bourke in the Union days--with which
we have nought to do

(Their creed was narrow, their methods crude, but
they stuck to 'the cause' like glue).

He came into town from the Lost Soul Run for his
grim half-yearly 'bend,'

And because of a curious hobby he had, he was
known as 'The Stranger's Friend.'

It is true to the region of adjectives when I say that
the spree was 'grim,'

For to go on the spree was a sacred rite, or a heathen
rite, to him,

To shout for the travellers passing through to the
land where the lost soul bakes—

Till they all seemed devils of different breeds, and his
pockets were filled with snakes.

In the joyful mood, in the solemn mood—in his
cynical stages too—

In the maudlin stage, in the fighting stage, in the
stage when all was blue—

From the joyful hour when his spree commenced,
right through to the awful end,

He never lost grip of his 'fixed idee' that he was the
Stranger's Friend.

'The feller as knows, *he* can battle around for his
bloomin' self,' he'd say—

'I don't give a curse for the "blanks" I know—send
the hard-up bloke this way ;

'Send the stranger round, and I'll see him through,'
and, e'en as the bushman spoke,

The chaps and fellers would tip the wink to a casual,
'hard-up bloke.'

And it wasn't only a bushman's 'bluff' to the fame
of the Friend they scored,
For he'd shout the stranger a suit of clothes, and he'd
pay for the stranger's board—
The worst of it was that he'd skite all night on the
edge of the stranger's bunk,
And never got helplessly drunk himself till he'd got
the stranger drunk.

And the chaps and the fellers would speculate—by
way of a ghastly joke—
As to who'd be caught by the 'jim-jams' first—the
Friend or the hard-up bloke ?
And the 'Joker' would say that there wasn't a doubt
as to who'd be damned in the end,
When the Devil got hold of a hard-up bloke in the
shape of the Stranger's Friend.

It mattered not to the Stranger's Friend what the
rest might say or think,
He always held that the hard-up state was due to the
curse of drink,
To the evils of cards, and of company : ' But a young
cove's built that way,
' And I was a bloomin' fool meself when I started out,'
he'd say.

At the end of the spree, in clean white 'moles,' clean-shaven, and cool as ice,
He'd give the stranger a 'bob' or two, and some straight Out Back advice ;
Then he'd tramp away for the Lost Soul Run, where the hot dust rose like smoke,
Having done his duty to all mankind, for he'd 'stuck to a hard-up bloke.'

They'll say 'tis a 'song of a sot,' perhaps, but the Song of a Sot is true.

I have 'battled' myself, and *you* know, you chaps, what a man in the bush goes through ;
Let us hope when the last of his sprees is past, and his cheques and his strength are done,
That, amongst the sober and thrifty mates, the Stranger's Friend has *one*.

THE GOD-FORGOTTEN ELECTION

PAT M'DURMER brought the tidings to the town of
God-Forgotten :

‘There are lively days before ye—commin Parly-
mint’s dissolved !’

And the boys were all excited, for the State, of
course, was ‘rotten,’

And, in subsequent elections, God-Forgotten was
involved.

There was little there to live for save in drinking
beer and eating ;

But we rose on this occasion ere the news appeared
in print,

For the boys of God-Forgotten, at a wild, uproarious
meeting,

Nominated Billy Blazes for the commin Parly-
mint.

Other towns had other favourites, but the day before
the battle

Bushmen flocked to God-Forgotten, and the distant
sheds were still ;

Sheep were left to go to glory, and neglected mobs of
cattle

Went a-straying down the river at their sweet
bucolic will.

William Spouter stood for Freetrade (and his votes
were split by Nottin),

He had influence behind him and he also had the
tin,

But across the lonely flatlands came the cry of God-
Forgotten,

‘Vote for Blazes and Protection, and the land
you’re living in !’

Pat M‘Durmer said, ‘Ye schaymers, please to shut
yer ugly faces,

‘Lend yer dirty ears a momint while I give ye all
a hint :

‘*Keep ye sober till to-morrow and record yer vote for
Blazes*

‘If ye want to send a ringer to the commin Parly-
mint.

‘As a young and growin’ township God-Forgotten’s
been neglected,

‘And, if we’d be ripresented, *now’s* the moment to
begin—

‘Have the local towns encouraged, local industries
purTECTED :

‘Vote for Blazes, and Protection, and the land ye’re
livin’ in.

‘I don’t say that William Blazes is a perfect out-an’
outer,

‘I don’t say he have the larnin’, for he never had
the luck ;

‘I don’t say he have the logic, or the gift of gab, like
Spouter,

‘I don’t say he have the practice—BUT I SAY HE
HAVE THE PLUCK !

‘Now the country’s gone to ruin, and the Govern-
ments are rotten,

‘But he’ll save the public credit and purTECT the
public tin ;

‘To the iverlastin’ glory of the name of God-Forgotten

‘Vote for Blazes and Protection, and the land ye’re
livin’ in !’

Pat M'D. went on the war-path, and he worked like
salts and senna,

For he organised committees full of energy and
push ;

And those wild committees riding through the whisky-
fed Gehenna

Routed out astonished voters from their humpies
in the bush.

Everything on wheels was 'rinted,' and half-sobered
drunks were shot in ;

Said M'Durmer to the driver, 'If ye want to save
yer skin,

'Never stop to wet yer whistles—drive like hell to
God-Forgotten,

'Make the villains plump for Blazes, and the land
they're livin' in.'

Half the local long-departed (for the purpose resur-
rected)

Plumped for Blazes and Protection, and the country
where they died ;

So he topped the poll by sixty, and when Blazes was
elected

There was victory and triumph on the God-For-
gotten side.

Then the boys got up a banquet, and our chairman,
Pat M'Durmer,

Was next day discovered sleeping in the local
baker's bin—

All the dough had risen round him, but we heard a
smothered murmur,

'Vote for Blazes—and Protection—and the land
ye're livin' in.'

Now the great Sir William Blazes lives in London,
'cross the waters,

And they say his city mansion is the swellest in
West End,

But I very often wonder if his toney sons and
daughters

Ever heard of Billy Blazes who was once the
'people's friend.'

Does his biassed memory linger round that wild
electioneering

When the men of God-Forgotten stuck to him
through thick and thin?

Does he ever, in his dreaming, hear the cry above the
cheering :

'Vote for Blazes and Protection, and the land
you're livin' in?'

.

Ah, the bush was grand in those days, and the
Western boys were daisies,
And their scheming and their dodging would outdo
the wildest print ;
Still my recollection lingers round the time when
Billy Blazes
Was returned by God-Forgotten to the ‘Commin
Parlymint’ :
Still I keep a sign of canvas—’twas a mate of mine
that made it—
And its paint is cracked and powdered, and its
threads are bare and thin,
Yet upon its grimy surface you can read in letters
faded :
‘Vote for Blazes and Protection, and the Land
you’re livin’ in.’

THE BOSS'S BOOTS

THE shearers squint along the pens, they squint along
the 'shoots ;'

The shearers squint along the board to catch the
Boss's boots ;

They have no time to straighten up, they have no
time to stare,

But when the Boss is looking on, they like to be
aware.

*The 'rouser' has no soul to save. Condemn the rouse-
about !*

*And sling 'em in, and rip 'em through, and get the bell-
sheep out ;*

*And skim it by the tips at times, or take it with the
roots—*

*But 'pink' 'em nice and pretty when you see the Boss's
boots.*

The shearing super sprained his foot, as bosses sometimes do—

And wore, until the shed cut out, one 'side-spring'
and one shoe ;

And though he changed his pants at times—some
worn-out and some neat—

No 'tiger' there could possibly mistake the Boss's
feet.

The Boss affected larger boots than many Western
men,

And Jim the Ringer swore the shoe was half as big
again ;

And tigers might have *heard* the boss ere any harm
was done—

For when he passed it was a sort of dot and carry one.

But now there comes a picker-up who sprained his
ankle, too,

And limping round the shed he found the Boss's
cast-off shoe.

He went to work, all legs and arms, as green-hand
rousers will,

And never dreamed of Boss's boots—much less of
Bogan Bill.

*Ye sons of sin that tramp and shear in hot and dusty
scrubs,
Just keep away from 'headin' 'em,' and keep away from
pubs,
And keep away from handicaps—for so your sugar
scoots—
And you may own a station yet and wear the Boss's
boots.*

And Bogan by his mate was heard to mutter through
his hair :

‘ The Boss has got a rat to-day : he's buckin' every-
where—

‘ He's trainin' for a bike, I think, the way he comes
an' scoots,

‘ He's like a bloomin' cat on mud the way he shifts
his boots.’

Now Bogan Bill was shearing rough and chanced to
cut a teat ;

He stuck his leg in front at once, and slewed the ewe
a bit ;

He hurried up to get her through, when, close beside
his shoot,

He saw a large and ancient shoe, in mateship with a
boot.

He thought that he'd be fined all right—he couldn't
turn the 'yoe ;'

The more he wished the boss away, the more he
wouldn't go ;

And Bogan swore amenfully—beneath his breath he
swore—

And he was never known to 'pink' so prettily
before.

And Bogan through his bristling scalp in his mind's
eye could trace,

The cold, sarcastic smile that lurked about the Boss's
face ;

He cursed him with a silent curse in language known
to few,

He cursed him from his boot right up, and then down
to his shoe.

But while he shore so mighty clean, and while he
screened the teat,

He fancied there was something wrong about the
Boss's feet :

The boot grew unfamiliar, and the odd shoe seemed
awry,

And slowly up the trouser went the tail of Bogan's eye.

Then swiftly to the features from a plaited green-hide
belt —

You'd have to ring a shed or two to feel as Bogan
felt—

For 'twas his green-hand picker-up (who wore a
vacant look),

And Bogan saw the Boss outside consulting with his
cook.

And Bogan Bill was hurt and mad to see that rouse-
about ;

And Bogan laid his ' Wolseley ' down and knocked
that rouser out ;

He knocked him right across the board, he tumbled
through the shoot —

' I'll learn the fool,' said Bogan Bill, ' to flash the
Boss's boot ! '

The rouser squints along the pens, he squints along
the shoots,

And gives his men the office when they miss the
Boss's boots.

They have no time to straighten up, they're too well-
bred to stare,

But when the Boss is looking on they like to be
aware.

*The rouser has no soul to lose—it's blarst the rouseabout!
And rip 'em through and yell for 'tar' and get the bell-
sheep out,*

*And take it with the scum at times or take it with the
roots,—*

*But 'pink' 'em nice and pretty when you see the Boss's
boots.*

'Rouseabout' and 'picker-up' are interchangeable terms in above rhymes, as also 'boss' and 'super'; the shed-name for the latter is 'Boss-over-the-board.' The shearer is paid by the hundred, the rouser by the week. 'Pink 'em pretty': to shear clean to the skin. 'Bell-sheep': shearers are not supposed to take another sheep out of pen when 'Smoke-ho,' breakfast or dinner bell goes, but some time themselves to get so many sheep out, and *one as the bell goes*, which makes more work for the rouser and entrenches on his 'smoke-ho,' as he must leave his 'board' clean. Shearers are seldom or never fined now.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE PUSH

As the night was falling slowly down on city, town
and bush,
From a slum in Jones' Alley sloped the Captain of
the Push ;
And he scowled towards the North, and he scowled
towards the South,
As he hooked his little finger in the corners of his
mouth.
Then his whistle, loud and shrill, woke the echoes of
the ' Rocks,'
And a dozen ghouls came sloping round the corners
of the blocks.

There was nought to rouse their anger ; yet the oath
that each one swore
Seemed less fit for publication than the one that went
before.

For they spoke the gutter language with the easy flow
that comes

Only to the men whose childhood knew the brothels
and the slums.

Then they spat in turns, and halted ; and the one
that came behind,

Spitting fiercely on the pavement, called on Heaven
to strike him blind.

Let us first describe the captain, bottle-shouldered,
pale and thin,

For he was the beau-ideal of a Sydney larrikin ;

E'en his hat was most suggestive of the city where we
live,

With a gallows-tilt that no one, save a larrikin, can
give ;

And the coat, a little shorter than the writer would
desire,

Showed a more or less uncertain portion of his strange
attire.

That which tailors know as 'trousers'—known by
him as 'bloomin' bags'—

Hanging loosely from his person, swept, with tattered
ends, the flags ;

And he had a pointed sternpost to the boots that
peeped below,

(Which he laced up from the centre of the nail of his
great toe),

And he wore his shirt uncollar'd, and the tie
correctly wrong ;

But I think his vest was shorter than should be in
one so long.

And the captain crooked his finger at a stranger on
the kerb,

Whom he qualified politely with an adjective and verb,
And he begged the Gory Bleeders that they wouldn't
interrupt

Till he gave an introduction—it was painfully
abrupt—

'Here's the bleedin' push, me covey—here's a
(something) from the bush !

'Strike me dead, he wants to join us !' said the
captain of the push.

Said the stranger : 'I am nothing but a bushy and
a dunce ;

'But I read about the Bleeders in the WEEKLY
GASBAG once :

‘Sitting lonely in the humpy when the wind began to
“whoosh,”

‘How I longed to share the dangers and the pleasures
of the push!

‘Gosh! I hate the swells and good ’uns—I could
burn ’em in their beds;

‘I am with you, if you’ll have me, and I’ll break
their blazing heads.’

‘Now, look here,’ exclaimed the captain to the
stranger from the bush,

‘Now, look here—suppose a feller was to split upon
the push,

‘Would you lay for him and fetch him, even if the
traps were round?

‘Would you lay him out and kick him to a jelly on
the ground?

‘Would you jump upon the nameless—kill, or cripple
him, or both?

‘Speak? or else I’ll—SPEAK!’ The stranger answered,
‘My kerlonial oath!’

‘Now, look here,’ exclaimed the captain to the stranger
from the bush,

‘Now, look here—suppose the Bleeders let you come
and join the push,

‘Would you smash a bleedin’ bobby if you got the blank alone?’

‘Would you break a swell or Chinkie—split his garret with a stone?’

‘Would you have a “moll” to keep yer—like to swear off work for good?’

‘Yes, my oath!’ replied the stranger. ‘My kerlonial oath! I would!’

‘Now, look here,’ exclaimed the captain to that stranger from the bush,

‘Now, look here—before the Bleeders let yer come and join the push,

‘You must prove that you’re a blazer—you must prove that you have grit

‘Worthy of a Gory Bleeder—you must show your form a bit—

‘Take a rock and smash that winder?’ and the stranger, nothing loth,

Took the rock and—smash! They only muttered
‘My kerlonial oath!’

So they swore him in, and found him sure of aim and light of heel,

And his only fault, if any, lay in his excessive zeal;

He was good at throwing metal, but we chronicle with
 pain
That he jumped upon a victim, damaging the watch
 and chain,
Ere the Bleeders had secured them ; yet the captain
 of the push
Swore a dozen oaths in favour of the stranger from
 the bush.

Late next morn the captain, rising, hoarse and thirsty
 from his lair,
Called the newly-feather'd Bleeder, but the stranger
 wasn't there !
Quickly going through the pockets of his 'bloomin'
 bags,' he learned
That the stranger had been through him for the stuff
 his 'moll' had earned ;
And the language that he muttered I should
 scarcely like to tell
(Stars ! and notes of exclamation !! blank and dash
 will do as well).

In the night the captain's signal woke the echoes of
 the 'Rocks,'
Brought the Gory Bleeders sloping thro' the shadows
 of the blocks ;

And they swore the stranger's action was a blood-
escaping shame,

While they waited for the nameless, but the name-
less never came.

And the Bleeders soon forgot him ; but the captain of
the push

Still is 'laying' round, in ballast, for the nameless
'from the bush.'

BILLY'S 'SQUARE AFFAIR'

LONG BILL, the captain of the push, was tired of his
estate,
And wished to change his life and win the love of
something 'straight';
'Twas rumour'd that the Gory B.'s had heard Long
Bill declare
That he would turn respectable and wed a 'square
affair.'

He craved the kiss of innocence ; his spirit longed to
rise ;
The 'Crimson Streak,' his faithful 'piece,' grew
hateful in his eyes ;
(And though, in her entirety, the Crimson Streak
'was there,'
I grieve to state the Crimson Streak was not a
'square affair.')

He wanted clothes, a masher suit, he wanted boots
and hat ;

His girl had earned a quid or two—he wouldn't part
with that ;

And so he went to Brickfield Hill, and from a draper
there

He 'shook' the proper kind of togs to fetch a 'square
affair.'

Long Bill went to the barber's shop and had a shave
and singe,

And from his narrow forehead combed his darling
Mabel fringe ;

Long Bill put on a 'square cut' and he brushed his
boots with care,

And roved about the Gardens till he mashed a 'square
affair.'

She was a tony servant-girl from somewhere on 'the
Shore ;'

She dressed in style that suited Bill—he could not
wish for more.

While in her guileless presence he had ceased to chew
or swear,

He knew the kind of barrack that can fetch a square
affair.

To thus desert his donah old was risky and a sin,
And 'twould have served him right if she had caved
his garret in.

The Gory Bleeders thought it too, and warned him
to take care

In case the Crimson Streak got scent of Billy's square
affair.

He took her to the stalls ; 'twas dear, but Billy said
' Wot odds !'

He couldn't take his square affair amongst the crimson
gods.

They wandered in the park at night, and hugged
each other there—

But, ah ! the Crimson Streak got wind of Billy's
square affair !

'The blank and space and stars !' she yelled ; 'the
nameless crimson dash !

'I'll smash the blanky crimson and his square affair,
I'll smash'—

In short, she drank and raved and shrieked and tore
her crimson hair,

And swore to murder Billy and to pound his square
affair.

And so one summer evening, as the day was growing
dim,

She watched her bloke go out, and foxed his square
affair and him.

That night the park was startled by the shrieks that
rent the air—

The 'Streak' had gone for Billy and for Billy's square
affair.

The 'gory' push had foxed the Streak, they foxed
her to the park,

And they, of course, were close at hand to see the
bleedin' lark ;

A cop arrived in time to hear a 'gory B.' declare
'Gor blar-me ! here's the Red Streak foul of Billy's
square affair.'

.

Now Billy scowls about the Rocks, his manly beauty
marr'd,

And Billy's girl, upon her 'ed, is doin' six months
'ard ;

Bill's swivel eye is in a sling, his heart is in despair,
And in the Sydney 'Orspital lies Billy's square affair.

A DERRY ON A COVE

'TWAS in the felon's dock he stood, his eyes were black
and blue ;

His voice with grief was broken, and his nose was
broken, too ;

He muttered, as that broken nose he wiped upon his
cap—

'It's orful when the p'leece has got a derry on a
chap.

'I am a honest workin' cove, as any bloke can see,

'It's just because the p'leece has got a derry, sir, on
me ;

'Oh, yes, the legal gents can grin, I say it ain't no
joke—

'It's cruel when the p'leece has got a derry on a
bloke.'

‘Why don’t you go to work?’ he said (he muttered,
‘Why don’t you?’).

‘Yer honer knows as well as me there ain’t no work
to do.

‘And when I try to find a job I’m shaddered by a
trap—

‘It’s awful when the p’leece has got a derry on a
chap.’

I sigh’d and shed a tearlet for that noble nature
marred,

But, ah! the Bench was rough on him, and gave him
six months’ hard.

He only said, ‘Beyond the grave you’ll cop it hot, by
Jove!

‘There ain’t no angel p’leece to get a derry on a
cove.’

RISE YE! RISE YE!

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! claim your rights
with fire and steel !

Rise ye ! for the cursed tyrants crush ye with the
hiron 'eel !

They would treat ye worse than sl-a-a-ves ! they
would treat ye worse than brutes !

Rise and crush the selfish tyrants ! ku-r-rush them
with your hob-nailed boots !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! glorious toilers !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !

Erwake ! er-rise !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! tyrants come across
the waves !

Will ye yield the Rights of Labour ? will ye ? *will* ye
still be sl-a-a-ves ? ! ! !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! mighty toilers ! and revoke the
rotten laws !

Lo ! your wives go out a-washing while ye battle for
the caws !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! glorious toilers !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !

Erwake ! er-rise !

Our gerlorious dawn is breaking ! Lo ! the tyrant
trembles now !

He will sta-a-rve us here no longer ! toilers will not
bend or bow !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! rise ! behold, revenge
is near ;

See the leaders of the people ! come an' 'ave a pint o'
beer !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! glorious toilers !

Erwake ! er-rise !

Lo ! the poor are starved, my brothers ! lo ! our
wives and children weep !

Lo ! our women toil to keep us while the toilers are
asleep !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! rise and break the
tyrant's chain !

March ye ! march ye ! mighty toilers ! even to the
battle plain !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !

Erwake ! er-r-rise !

THE BALLAD OF MABEL CLARE

YE children of the Land of Gold,
I sing a song to you,
And if the jokes are somewhat old,
The main idea 's new.
So be it sung, by hut and tent,
Where tall the native grows ;
And understand, the song is meant
For singing through the nose.

There dwelt a hard old cockatoo
On western hills far out,
Where everything is green and blue,
Except, of course, in drought ;
A crimson Anarchist was he—
Held other men in scorn—
Yet preached that ev'ry man was free,
And also 'ekal born.'

He lived in his ancestral hut—

His missus wasn't there—

And there was no one with him but

His daughter, Mabel Clare.

Her eyes and hair were like the sun ;

Her foot was like a mat ;

Her cheeks a trifle overdone ;

She was a democrat.

A manly independence, born

Among the trees, she had,

She treated womankind with scorn,

And often cursed her dad.

She hated swells and shining lights,

For she had seen a few,

And she believed in ' women's rights '

(She mostly got 'em, too).

A stranger at the neighb'ring run

Sojourned, the squatter's guest,

He was unknown to anyone,

But like a swell was dress'd ;

He had an eyeglass to his eye,

A collar to his ears,

His feet were made to tread the sky,

His mouth was formed for sneers.

He wore the latest toggery,
The loudest thing in ties—
'Twas generally reckoned he
Was something in disguise.
But who he was, or whence he came,
Was long unknown, except
Unto the squatter, who the name
And noble secret kept.

And strolling in the noontide heat,
Beneath the blinding glare,
This noble stranger chanced to meet
The radiant Mabel Clare.

She saw at once he was a swell—
According to her lights—
But, ah ! 'tis very sad to tell,
She met him oft of nights.

And, strolling through a moonlit gorge,
She chatted all the while
Of Ingersoll, and Henry George,
And Bradlaugh and Carlyle :
In short, he learned to love the girl,
And things went on like this,
Until he said he was an Earl,
And asked her to be his.

- ‘Oh, say no more, Lord Kawlinee,
‘Oh, say no more!’ she said;
‘Oh, say no more, Lord Kawlinee,
‘I wish that I was dead:
‘My head is in a hawful whirl,
‘The truth I dare not tell—
‘I am a democratic girl,
‘And cannot wed a swell!’
‘Oh love!’ he cried, ‘but you forget
‘That you are most unjust;
‘’Twas not my fault that I was set
‘Within the upper crust.
‘Heed not the yarns the poets tell—
‘Oh, darling, do not doubt
‘A simple lord can love as well
‘As any rouseabout!
‘For you I’ll give my fortune up—
‘I’d go to work for you!
‘I’ll put the money in the cup
‘And drop the title, too.
‘Oh, fly with me! Oh, fly with me
‘Across the mountains blue!
‘Hoh, fly with me! *Hoh, fly with me!*——’
That very night she flew.

They took the train and journeyed down—

Across the range they sped—

Until they came to Sydney town,

Where shortly they were wed.

And still upon the western wild

Admiring teamsters tell

How Mabel's father cursed his child

For clearing with a swell.

'What ails my bird this bridal night,'

Exclaimed Lord Kawlinee ;

'What ails my own this bridal night—

'O love, confide in me !'

'Oh now,' she said, 'that I am yaws

'You'll let me weep—I must—

'I did desert the people's cause

'To join the upper crust.'

O proudly smiled his lordship then—

His chimney-pot he floor'd—

'Look up, my love, and smile again,

'For I am not a lord !'

His eye-glass from his eye he tore,

The dickey from his breast,

And turned and stood his bride before

A rouseabout—confess'd !

‘Unknown I’ve loved you long,’ he said,

‘And I have loved you true—

‘A-shearing in your guv’ner’s shed

‘I learned to worship you.

‘I do not care for place or pelf,

‘For now, my love, I’m sure

That you will love me for myself

‘And not because I’m poor.

‘To prove your love I spent my cheque

‘To buy this swell rig-out ;

‘So fling your arms about my neck

‘For I’m a rouseabout !’

At first she gave a startled cry,

Then, safe from care’s alarms,

She sigh’d a soul-subduing sigh

And sank into his arms.

He pawned the togs, and home he took

His bride in all her charms ;

The proud old cockatoo received

The pair with open arms.

And long they lived, the faithful bride,

The noble rouseabout—

And if she wasn’t satisfied

She never let it out.

CONSTABLE M'CARTY'S INVESTIGATIONS

Most unpleasantly adjacent to the haunts of lower
orders

Stood a 'terrace' in the city when the current year
began,

And a notice indicated there were vacancies for
boarders

In the middle house, and lodgings for a single
gentleman.

Now, a singular observer could have seen but few
attractions

Whether in the house, or 'missus, or the notice,
or the street,

But at last there came a lodger whose appearances
and actions

Puzzled Constable M'Carty, the policeman on the
beat.

He (the single gent) was wasted almost to emaciation,
And his features were the palest that M'Carty ever
saw,

And these indications, pointing to a past of dissipation,
Greatly strengthened the suspicions of the agent of
the law.

He (the lodger—hang the pronoun!) seemed to like
the stormy weather,

When the elements in battle kept it up a little
late;

Yet he'd wander in the moonlight when the stars
were close together,

Taking ghostly consolation in a visionary state.

He would walk the streets at midnight, when the
storm-king raised his banner,

Walk without his old umbrella,—wave his arms
above his head :

Or he'd fold them tight, and mutter, in a wild,
disjointed manner,

While the town was wrapped in slumber and he
should have been in bed.

198 CONSTABLE M'CARTY'S INVESTIGATIONS

Said the constable-on-duty: 'Shure, Oi wonther phwat
his trade is ?'

And the constable would watch him from the
shadow of a wall,

But he never picked a pocket, and he ne'er accosted
ladies,

And the constable was puzzled what to make of
him at all.

Now, M'Carty had arrested more than one notorious
dodger,

He had heard of men afflicted with the strangest
kind of fads,

But he couldn't fix the station or the business of the
lodger,

Who at times would chum with cadgers, and at
other times with cads.

And the constable would often stand and wonder how
the gory

Sheol the stranger got his living, for he loafed the
time away

And he often sought a hillock when the sun went
down in glory,

Just as if he was a mourner at the burial of the
day.

Mac. had noticed that the lodger did a mighty lot of
smoking,

And could 'stow away a long 'un,' never winking,
so he could ;

And M'Carty once, at midnight, came upon the lodger
poking

Round about suspicious alleys where the common
houses stood.

Yet the constable had seen him in a class above
suspicion—

Seen him welcomed with effusion by a dozen
'toney gents'—

Seen him driving in the buggy of a rising politician
Thro' the gateway of the member's toney private
residence.

And the constable, off duty, had observed the lodger
slipping

Down a lane to where the river opened on the
ocean wide,

Where he'd stand for hours gazing at the distant
anchor'd shipping,

But he never took his coat off, so it wasn't
suicide.

200 CONSTABLE M'CARTY'S INVESTIGATIONS

For the constable had noticed that a man who's filled
with loathing

For his selfish fellow-creatures and the evil things
that be,

Will, for some mysterious reason, shed a portion of
his clothing,

Ere he takes his first and final plunge into eternity.

And M'Carty, once at midnight—be it said to his
abasement—

Left his beat and climbed a railing of considerable
height,

Just to watch the lodger's shadow on the curtain of
his casement

While the little room was lighted in the listening
hours of night.

Now, at first the shadow hinted that the substance
sat inditing ;

Now it indicated toothache, or the headache ;
and again,

'Twould exaggerate the gestures of a dipsomaniac
fighting

Those original conceptions of a whisky-sodden
brain.

Then the constable, retreating, scratched his head and
muttered 'Sorra

'Wan of me can undershtand it. But Oi'll keep
me Oi on him,

'Divil take him and his tantrums; he's a lunatic,
begorra!

'Or, if he was up to mischief, he'd be sure to douse
the glim.'

But M'Carty wasn't easy, for he had a vague suspicion
That a 'skame' was being plotted; and he thought
the matter down

Till his mind was pretty certain that the business was
sedition,

And the man, in league with others, sought to
overthrow the Crown.

But, in spite of observation, Mac received no infor-
mation

And was forced to stay inactive, being puzzled for
a charge.

That the lodger was a madman seemed the only
explanation,

Tho' the house would scarcely harbour such a
lunatic at large.

His appearance failed to warrant apprehension as a
vagrant,

Tho' 'twas getting very shabby, as the constable
could see ;

But M'Carty in the meantime hoped to catch him in
a flagrant

Breach of peace, or the intention to commit a
felony.

(For digression there is leisure, and it is the writer's
pleasure

Just to pause a while and ponder on a painful legal
fact,

Being forced to say in sorrow, and a line of doubtful
measure,

That there's nothing so elastic as the cruel Vagrant
Act)

Now, M'Carty knew his duty, and was brave as any
lion,

But he dreaded being 'landed' in an influential bog—
As the chances were he would be if the man he had
his eye on

Was a person of importance who was travelling
incog.

Want of sleep and over-worry seemed to tell upon

M'Carty :

He was thirsty more than ever, but his appetite
resigned ;

He was previously reckoned as a jolly chap and
hearty,

But the mystery was lying like a mountain on his
mind.

Tho' he tried his best, he couldn't get a hold upon
the lodger,

For the latter's antecedents weren't known to the
police—

They considered that the 'devil' was a dark and
artful dodger

Who was scheming under cover for the downfall
of the peace.

'Twas a simple explanation, though M'Carty didn't
know it,

Which with half his penetration he might easily
have seen,

For the object of his dangerous suspicions was a poet,

*Who was not so widely famous as he thought he should
have been.*

And the constable grew thinner, till one morning,
 ' little dhramin'

' Av the sword of revelation that was leapin' from
 its sheath,'

He alighted on some verses in the columns of the
 FRAYMAN,

' *Wid the christian name an' surname av the lodger
 onderneath !*'

Now, M'Carty and the poet are as brother is to
 brother,

Or, at least, as brothers should be ; and they very
 often meet

On the lonely block at midnight, and they wink at
 one another—

Disappearing down the by-way of a shanty in the
 street.

And the poet's name you're asking ?—well, the ground
 is very tender,

You must wait until the public put the gilt upon
 the name,

Till a glorious, sorrow-drowning, and, perhaps, a final
 ' bender,'

Heralds his triumphant entrance to the thunder-
 halls of Fame.

AT THE TUG-OF-WAR

'Twas in a tug-of-war where I—the guvnor's hope and
pride—

Stepped proudly on the platform as the ringer on my
side ;

Old dad was in his glory there—it gave the old man
joy

To fight a passage through the crowd and barrack for
his boy.

A friend came up and said to me, 'Put out your
muscles, John,

'And pull them to eternity—your guvnor's looking
on.'

I paused before I grasped the rope, and glanced
around the place,

And, foremost in the waiting crowd, I saw the old
man's face.

My mates were strong and plucky chaps, but very
soon I knew
That our opponents had the weight and strength to
pull them through ;
The boys were losing surely and defeat was very near,
When, high above the mighty roar, I heard the old
man cheer !

I felt my muscles swelling when the old man cheer'd
for me,
I felt as though I'd burst my heart, or gain the
victory !
I shouted, ' Now ! Together ! ' and a steady strain
replied,
And, with a mighty heave, I helped to beat the other
side !

Oh ! how the old man shouted in his wild, excited joy !
I thought he'd burst his boiler then, a-cheering for
his boy ;
The chaps, oh ! how they cheered me, while the girls
all smiled so kind,
They praised me, little dreaming, how the old man
pulled behind.

.

He barracks for his boy no more—his grave is old
and green,
And sons have grown up round me since he vanished
from the scene ;
But, when the cause is worthy where I fight for
victory,
In fancy still I often hear the old man cheer for me.

HERE'S LUCK !

OLD Time is tramping close to-day—you hear his
bluchers fall,

A mighty change is on the way, an' God protect us
all ;

Some dust'll fly from beery coats—at least it's been
declared.

I'm glad that wimin has the votes—but just a trifle
scared.

I'm just a trifle scared—For why ? The wimin mean
to rule ;

It makes me feel like days gone by when I was caned
at school.

The days of men is nearly dead—of double moons
and stars—

They'll soon put out our pipes, 'tis said, an' close the
public bars.

No more we'll take a glass of ale when pushed with
care an' strife,

An' chuckle home with that old tale we used to tell
the wife.

We'll laugh an' joke an' sing no more with jolly beery
chums,

An' shout 'Here's luck !' while waitin' for the luck
that never comes.

Did we prohibit swillin' tea clean out of common-
sense

Or legislate on gossipin' across a backyard fence ?

Did we prohibit bustles—or the hoops when they was
here ?

The wimin never think of this—they want to stop
our beer.

The track o' life is dry enough, an' crossed with many
a rut,

But, oh ! we'll find it long an' rough when all the
pubs is shut ;

When all the pubs is shut, an' gone the doors we
used to seek,

An' we go toilin', thirstin' on through Sundays all the
week.

For since the days when pubs was 'inns'—in years
gone past 'n' far—

Poor sinful souls have drowned their sins an' sorrers
at the bar ;

An' though at times it led to crimes, an' debt, and
such complaints—

I scarce dare think about the time when all mankind
is saints.

'Twould make the bones of Bacchus leap an' break
his coffin lid ;

And Burns's ghost would wail an' weep as Bobby
never did.

But let the preachers preach in style, an' rave and
rant—'n' buck,

I rather guess they'll hear awhile the old war-cry :
'Here's Luck !'

The world might wobble round the sun, an' all the
banks go bung,

But pipes'll smoke an' liquor run while Auld Lang
Syne is sung.

While men are driven through the mill, an' flinty
times is struck,

They'll find a private entrance still !

Here's Luck, old man—Here's Luck !

THE MEN WHO COME BEHIND

THERE'S a class of men (and women) who are always
on their guard—

Cunning, treacherous, suspicious—feeling softly—
grasping hard—

Brainy, yet without the courage to forsake the
beaten track—

Cautiously they feel their way behind a bolder spirit's
back.

If you save a bit of money, and you start a little
store—

Say, an oyster-shop, for instance, where there wasn't
one before—

When the shop begins to pay you, and the rent is off
your mind,

You will see another started by a chap that comes
behind.

So it is, and so it might have been, my friend, with
me and you—

When a friend of both and neither interferes between
the two ;

They will fight like fiends, forgetting in their passion
mad and blind,

That the row is mostly started by the folk who come
behind.

They will stick to you like sin will, while your
money comes and goes,

But they'll leave you when you haven't got a shilling
in your clothes.

You may get some help above you, but you'll nearly
always find

That you cannot get assistance from the men who
come behind.

There are many, far too many, in the world of prose
and rhyme,

Always looking for another's ' footsteps on the sands
of time.'

Journalistic imitators are the meanest of mankind ;
And the grandest themes are hackneyed by the pens
that come behind.

If you strike a novel subject, write it up, and do not fail,
They will rhyme and prose about it till your very own
is stale,

As they raved about the region that the wattle-
boughs perfume
Till the reader cursed the bushman and the stink of
wattle-bloom.

They will follow in your footsteps while you're
groping for the light ;
But they'll run to get before you when they see you're
going right ;
And they'll trip you up and baulk you in their blind
and greedy heat,
Like a stupid pup that hasn't learned to trail behind
your feet.

Take your loads of sin and sorrow on more energetic
backs !

Go and strike across the country where there are not
any tracks !

And—we fancy that the subject could be further
treated here,

But we'll leave it to be hackneyed by the fellows in
the rear.

THE DAYS WHEN WE WENT SWIMMING

THE breezes waved the silver grass,
Waist-high along the siding,
And to the creek we ne'er could pass
Three boys on bare-back riding ;
Beneath the sheoaks in the bend
The waterhole was brimming—
Do you remember yet, old friend,
The times we 'went in swimming?'

The days we 'played the wag' from school—
Joys shared—and paid for singly—
The air was hot, the water cool—
And naked boys are kingly !
With mud for soap the sun to dry—
A well planned lie to stay us,
And dust well rubbed on neck and face
Lest cleanliness betray us.

And you'll remember farmer Kutz—

Though scarcely for his bounty—

He leased a forty-acre block,

And thought he owned the county ;

A farmer of the old world school,

That men grew hard and grim in,

He drew his water from the pool

That we preferred to swim in.

And do you mind when down the creek

His angry way he wended,

A green-hide cartwhip in his hand

For our young backs intended ?

Three naked boys upon the sand—

Half buried and half sunning—

Three startled boys without their clothes

Across the paddocks running.

We've had some scares, but we looked blank

When, resting there and chumming,

One glanced by chance along the bank

And saw the farmer coming !

And home impressions linger yet

Of cups of sorrow brimming ;

I hardly think that we'll forget

The last day we went swimming.

THE OLD BARK SCHOOL

It was built of bark and poles, and the floor was full
of holes

Where each leak in rainy weather made a pool ;
And the walls were mostly cracks lined with calico
and sacks—

There was little need for windows in the school.

Then we rode to school and back by the rugged gully
track,

On the old grey horse that carried three or four ;
And he looked so very wise that he lit the master's
eyes

Every time he put his head in at the door.

He had run with Cobb and Co.—‘that grey leader,
let him go!’

There were men ‘as knowed the brand upon his
hide,’

And ‘as knowed it on the course’ . Funeral ser-
vice : ‘Good old horse!’

When we burnt him in the gully where he died.

And the master thought the same. ’Twas from
Ireland that he came,

Where the tanks are full all summer, and the feed
is simply grand ;

And the joker then in vogue said his lessons wid a
brogue—

’Twas unconscious imitation, let the reader under-
stand.

And we learnt the world in scraps from some ancient
dingy maps

Long discarded by the public-schools in town ;
And as nearly every book dated back to Captain
Cook

Our geography was somewhat upside-down.

It was 'in the book' and so—well, at that we'd let it
go,

For we never would believe that print could lie ;
And we all learnt pretty soon that when we came out
at noon

'The sun is in the south part of the sky.'

And Ireland ! *that* was known from the coast line to
Athlone :

We got little information *re* the land that gave us
birth ;

Save that Captain Cook was killed (and was very
likely grilled)

And 'the natives of New Holland are the lowest
race on earth.'

And a woodcut, in its place, of the same degraded
race

Seemed a lot more like a camel than the black-
fellows we knew ;

Jimmy Bullock, with the rest, scratched his head and
gave it best ;

But his faith was sadly shaken by a bobtailed
kangaroo.

But the old bark-school is gone, and the spot it stood
upon

Is a cattle-camp in winter where the curlew's cry
is heard ;

There's a brick-school on the flat, but a schoolmate
teaches that,

For, about the time they built it, our old master
was ' transferred.'

But the bark-school comes again with exchanges 'cross
the plain —

With the OUT-BACK ADVERTISER ; and my fancy
roams at large

When I read of passing stock, of a western mob or flock,
With ' James Bullock,' ' Grey,' or ' Henry Dale ' in
charge.

And I think how Jimmy went from the old bark
school content,

With his ' eddication ' finished, with his pack-horse
after him ;

And perhaps if I were back I would take the self-same
track,

For I wish my learning ended when the Master
' finished ' Jim.

TROUBLE ON THE SELECTION

You lazy boy, you're here at last,
You must be wooden-legged ;
Now, are you sure the gate is fast
And all the sliprails pegged
And all the milkers at the yard,
The calves all in the pen ?
We don't want Poley's calf to suck
His mother dry again.

And did you mend the broken rail
And make it firm and neat ?
I s'pose you want that brindle steer
All night among the wheat.
And if he finds the lucerne patch,
He'll stuff his belly full ;
He'll eat till he gets ' blown ' on that
And busts like Ryan's bull.

Old Spot is lost? You'll drive me mad,
You will, upon my soul !
She might be in the boggy swamps
Or down a digger's hole.
You needn't talk, you never looked ;
You'd find her if you'd choose,
Instead of poking 'possum logs
And hunting kangaroos.

How came your boots as wet as muck ?
You tried to drown the ants !
Why don't you take your bluchers off,
Good Lord, he's tore his pants !
Your father's coming home to-night ;
You'll catch it hot, you'll see.
Now go and wash your filthy face
And come and get your tea.

THE PROFESSIONAL WANDERER

WHEN you've knocked about the country—been away
from home for years ;

When the past, by distance softened, nearly fills
your eyes with tears—

You are haunted oft, wherever or however you may
roam,

By a fancy that you ought to go and see the folks at
home.

You forget the family quarrels—little things that
used to jar—

And you think of how they'll worry—how they
wonder where you are ;

You will think you served them badly, and your own
part you'll condemn,

And it strikes you that you'll surely be a novelty
to them,

For your voice has somewhat altered, and your face
has somewhat changed—

And your views of men and matters over wider fields
have ranged.

Then it's time to save your money, or to watch it
(how it goes!) ;

Then it's time to get a 'Gladstone' and a decent suit
of clothes ;

Then it's time to practise daily with a hair-brush and
a comb,

Till you drop in unexpected on the folks and friends
at home.

When you've been at home for some time, and the
novelty's worn off,

And old chums no longer court you, and your friends
begin to scoff ;

When 'the girls' no longer kiss you, crying 'Jack !
how you have changed !'

When you're stale to your relations, and their manner
seems estranged ;

When the old domestic quarrels, round the table
thrice a day,

Make it too much like the old times—make you wish
you'd stayed away,

When, in short, you've spent your money in the
fulness of your heart,

And your clothes are getting shabby . . . Then
it's high time to depart.

A LITTLE MISTAKE

'Tis a yarn I heard of a new-chum 'trap'
On the edge of the Never-Never,
Where the dead men lie and the black men lie,
And the bushman lies for ever.

'Twas the custom still with the local blacks
To cadge in the 'altogether'—
They had less respect for our feelings then,
And more respect for the weather.

The trooper said to the sergeant's wife :
'Sure, I wouldn't seem unpleasant ;
'But there's women and childer about the place,
'And—barrin' a lady's present—

'There's ould King Billy wid niver a stitch
'For a month—may the drought cremate him !—
'Bar the wan we put in his dhirty head,
'Where his old Queen Mary bate him.

‘God give her strength!—and a peaceful reign—
‘Though she flies in a bit av a passion
‘If ony wan hints that her shtoyle an’ luks
‘Are a trifle behind the fashion.

‘There’s two of the boys by the stable now—
‘Be the powers! I’ll teach the varmints
‘To come wid nought but a shirt apiece,
‘And wid dirt for their nayther garmints.

‘Howld on, ye blaggards! How dare ye dare
‘To come widin sight av the houses?—
‘I’ll give ye a warnin’ all for wance
‘An’ a couple of ould pair of trousers.’

They took the pants as a child a toy,
The constable’s words beguiling
A smile of something beside their joy;
And they took their departure smiling.

And that very day, when the sun was low,
Two blackfellows came to the station;
They were filled with the courage of Queensland rum
And bursting with indignation.

The constable noticed, with growing ire,
They'd apparently dressed in a hurry ;
And their language that day, I am sorry to say,
Mostly consisted of 'plurry.'

The constable heard, and he wished himself back
In the land of the bogs and the ditches—
'You plurry big tight-britches p'liceman, what for
'You gibbit our missuses britches?'

And this was a case, I am bound to confess,
Where civilisation went under ;
Had one of the gins been *less* modest in dress
He'd never have made such a blunder.

And here let the moral be duly made known,
And hereafter signed and attested :
We should place more reliance on that which is shown
And less upon what is suggested.

A STUDY IN THE "NOOD"

'A SAILOR named Grice was seen by the guard of a goods train lying close to the railway-line near Warner Town (S.A.) in a nude condition. He was unconscious, and had lain there three days, during one of which the glass registered 110 in the shade. *Grice expressed surprise that the train did not pick him up.*'—Daily paper. In consequence, the muse:—

HE was bare—we don't want to be rude—

(His condition was owing to drink)

They say his condition was nood,

Which amounts to the same thing, we think

(We mean his *condition*, we think,

'Twas a naked condition, or *nood*,

Which amounts to the same thing, we think)

Uncovered he lay on the grass

That shrivelled and shrunk ; and he stayed

Three hot summer days, while the glass

Was one hundred and ten in the shade.

(We nearly remarked that he *laid*,
But that was bad grammar we thought—
It *does* sound bucolic, we think
It smacks of the barnyard—
Of farming—of *pullets* in short.)

Unheeded he lay on the dirt ;
Beside him a part of his dress,
A tattered and threadbare old shirt
Was raised as a flag of distress.
(On a stick, like a flag of distress—
Reversed—we mean that the tail-end was up
Half-mast—on a stick—an evident flag of
distress.)

Perhaps in his dreams he persood
Bright visions of heav'nly bliss ;
And artists who study the nood
Never saw such a study as this.
The 'luggage' went by and the guard
Looked out and his eyes fell on Grice—
We fancy he looked at him hard,
We think that he looked at him twice.

They say (if the telegram's true)

When he woke up he wondered (good Lord !)

'Why the engine-man didn't heave to—

'Why the train didn't take him aboard.'

And now, by the case of poor Grice,

We think that a daily express

Should travel with sunshades and ice,

And a lookout for flags of distress.

A WORD TO TEXAS JACK

TEXAS JACK, you are amusin'. By Lord Harry, how
I laughed

When I seen yer rig and saddle with its bulwarks
fore-and-aft ;

Holy smoke ! In such a saddle how the dickens can
yer fall ?

Why, I seen a gal ride bareback with no bridle on at
all !

Gosh ! so-help-me ! strike-me-balmy ! if a bit o'
scenery

Like ter you in all yer rig-out on the earth I ever see !
How I'd like ter see a bushman use yer fixins, Texas
Jack ;

On the remnant of a saddle he can ride to hell and
back.

Why, I heerd a mother screamin' when her kid went
tossin' by
Ridin' bareback on a buckner that had murder in his
eye.

What? yer come to learn the natives how to squat
on horse's back!
Learn the cornstalk ridin'! Blazes!—w'at yer giv'n' us,
Texas Jack?
Learn the cornstalk—what the flamin', jumptup!
where's my country gone?
Why, the cornstalk's mother often rides the day afore
he's born!

You may talk about your ridin' in the city, bold an'
free,
Talk o' ridin' in the city, Texas Jack, but where'd yer
be
When the stock horse snorts an' bunches all 'is
quarters in a hump,
And the saddle climbs a sapling, an' the horse-shoes
split a stump?

No, before yer teach the native you must ride without
a fall
Up a gum or down a gully nigh as steep as any wall—

You must swim the roarin' Darlin' when the flood is
at its height
Bearin' down the stock an' stations to the great
Australian Bight.

You can't count the bulls an' bisons that yer copped
with your lassoo—
But a stout old myall bullock p'raps 'ud learn yer
somethin' new ;
Yer'd better make yer will an' leave yer papers neat
an' trim
Before yer make arrangements for the lassooin' of
him ;
Ere you'n' yer horse is catsmeat, fittin' fate for sich
galoots,
And yer saddle's turned to laces like we put in blucher
boots.

And yer say yer death on Injins ! We've got some-
thin' in yer line—
If yer think your fitin's ekal to the likes of Tommy
Ryan.

Take yer karkass up to Queensland where the ally-
gators chew
And the carpet-snake is handy with his tail for a
lassoo ;

Ride across the hazy regins where the lonely emus
wail

An' ye'll find the black'll track yer while yer lookin'
for his trail ;

He can track yer without stoppin' for a thousand miles
or more—

Come again, and he will show yer where yer spit the
year before.

But yer'd best be mighty careful, you'll be sorry you
kem here

When yer skewered to the fakements of yer saddle
with a spear—

When the boomerang is sailin' in the air, may heaven
help yer !

It will cut yer head off goin', an' come back again and
skelp yer.

P.S.—As poet and as Yankee I will greet you, Texas
Jack,

For it isn't no ill-feelin' that is gettin' up my back,
But I won't see this land crowded by each Yank and
British cuss

Who takes it in his head to come a-civilisin' us.

So if you feel like shootin' now, don't let yer pistol
cough—

(Our Government is very free at chokin' fellers off) ;
And though on your great continent there's misery in
the towns

An' not a few untitled lords and kings without their
crowns,

I will admit your countrymen is busted big, an' free,
An' great on ekal rites of men and great on liberty ;
I will admit yer fathers punched the gory tyrant's
head,

But then we've got our heroes, too, the diggers that
is dead —

The plucky men of Ballarat who toed the scratch
right well

And broke the nose of Tyranny and made his peepers
swell

For yankin' Lib.'s gold tresses in the roarin' days
gone by,

An' doublin' up his dirty fist to black her bonny eye ;
So when it comes to ridin' mokes, or hoistin' out the
Chow,

Or stickin' up for labour's rights, we don't want
showin' how.

They come to learn us cricket in the days of long ago,
An' Hanlan come from Canada to learn us how to
row,
An' 'doctors' come from 'Frisco just to learn us how
to skite,
An' 'pugs' from all the lands on earth to learn us
how to fight ;
An' when they go, as like or not, we find we're taken
in,
They've left behind no larnin'—but they've carried
off our tin.

THE GROG-AN'-GRUMBLE STEEPLECHASE

'TwiXT the coastline and the border lay the town of
Grog-an'-Grumble

In the days before the bushman was a dull 'n'
heartless drudge,

An' they say the local meeting was a drunken rough-
and-tumble,

Which was ended pretty often by an inquest on the
judge.

An' 'tis said the city talent very often caught a
tartar

In the Grog-an'-Grumble sportsman, 'n' retired
with broken heads,

For the fortune, life, and safety of the Grog-an'-
Grumble starter

Mostly hung upon the finish of the local thorough-
breds.

238 THE GROG-AN'-GRUMBLE STEEPLECHASE

Pat M'Durmer was the owner of a horse they called
the Screamer,

Which he called the 'quickest shteppe' 'twixt the
Darling and the sea ;'

And I think it's very doubtful if the stomach-
troubled dreamer

Ever saw a more outrageous piece of equine
scenery ;

For his points were most decided, from his end to his
beginning,

He had eyes of different colour, and his legs they
wasn't mates.

Pat M'Durmer said he always came 'widin a flip av
winnin','

An' his sire had come from England, 'n' his dam
was from the States.

Friends would argue with M'Durmer, and they said
he was in error

To put up his horse the Screamer, for he'd lose in
any case,

And they said a city racer by the name of Holy
Terror

Was regarded as the winner of the coming steeple-
chase ;

But he said he had the knowledge to come in when
it was raining,

And irrelevantly mentioned that he knew the time
of day,

So he rose in their opinion. It was noticed that the
training

Of the Screamer was conducted in a dark,
mysterious way.

Well, the day arrived in glory; 'twas a day of jubila-
tion

With careless-hearted bushmen for a hundred miles
around,

An' the rum 'n' beer 'n' whisky came in waggons from
the station,

An' the Holy Terror talent were the first upon the
ground.

Judge M'Ard—with whose opinion it was scarcely
safe to wrestle—

Took his dangerous position on the bark-and-sapling
stand :

He was what the local Stiggins used to speak of as a
' wessel

' Of wrath,' and he'd a bludgeon that he carried in
his hand.

' Off ye go !' the starter shouted, as down fell a stupid jockey—

Off they started in disorder—left the jockey where he lay—

And they fell and rolled and galloped down the crooked course and rocky,

Till the pumping of the Screamer could be heard a mile away.

But he kept his legs and galloped ; he was used to rugged courses,

And he lumbered down the gully till the ridge began to quake :

And he ploughed along the siding, raising earth till other horses

An' their riders, too, were blinded by the dust-cloud in his wake.

From the ruck he'd struggled slowly—they were much surprised to find him

Close abeam of Holy Terror as along the flat they tore—

Even higher still and denser rose the cloud of dust behind him,

While in more divided splinters flew the shattered rails before.

'Terror!' 'Dead heat!' they were shouting—

'Terror!' but the Screamer hung out

Nose to nose with Holy Terror as across the creek
they swung,

An' M'Durmer shouted loudly, 'Put yer tongue out !
put yer tongue out !'

An' the Screamer put his tongue out, and he won
by half-a-tongue.

BUT WHAT'S THE USE

BUT what's the use of writing 'bush'—

Though editors demand it—

For city folk, and farming folk,

Can never understand it.

They're blind to what the bushman sees

The best with eyes shut tightest,

Out where the sun is hottest and

The stars are most and brightest.

The crows at sunrise flopping round

Where some poor life has run down ;

The pair of emus trotting from

The lonely tank at sundown,

Their snaky heads well up, and eyes

Well out for man's manœuvres,

And feathers bobbing round behind

Like fringes round improvers.

The swagman tramping 'cross the plain ;

Good Lord, there's nothing sadder,
Except the dog that slopes behind

His master like a shadder ;
The turkey-tail to scare the flies,
The water-bag and billy ;
The nose-bag getting cruel light,
The traveller getting silly.

The plain that seems to Jackaroos
Like gently sloping rises,
The shrubs and tufts that's miles away

But magnified in sizes ;
The track that seems arisen up
Or else seems gently slopin',
And just a hint of kangaroos
Way out across the open.

The joy and hope the swagman feels
Returning, after shearing,
Or after six months' tramp Out Back,
He strikes the final clearing.

His weary spirit breathes again,
His aching legs seem limber
When to the East across the plain
He spots the Darling Timber !

But what's the use of writing 'bush'—

Though editors demand it—

For city folk and cockatoos,

They do not understand it.

They're blind to what the whaler sees

The best with eyes shut tightest,

Out where Australia's widest, and

The stars are most and brightest.

MAY, 1902.

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